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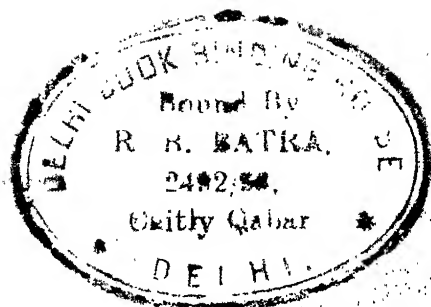
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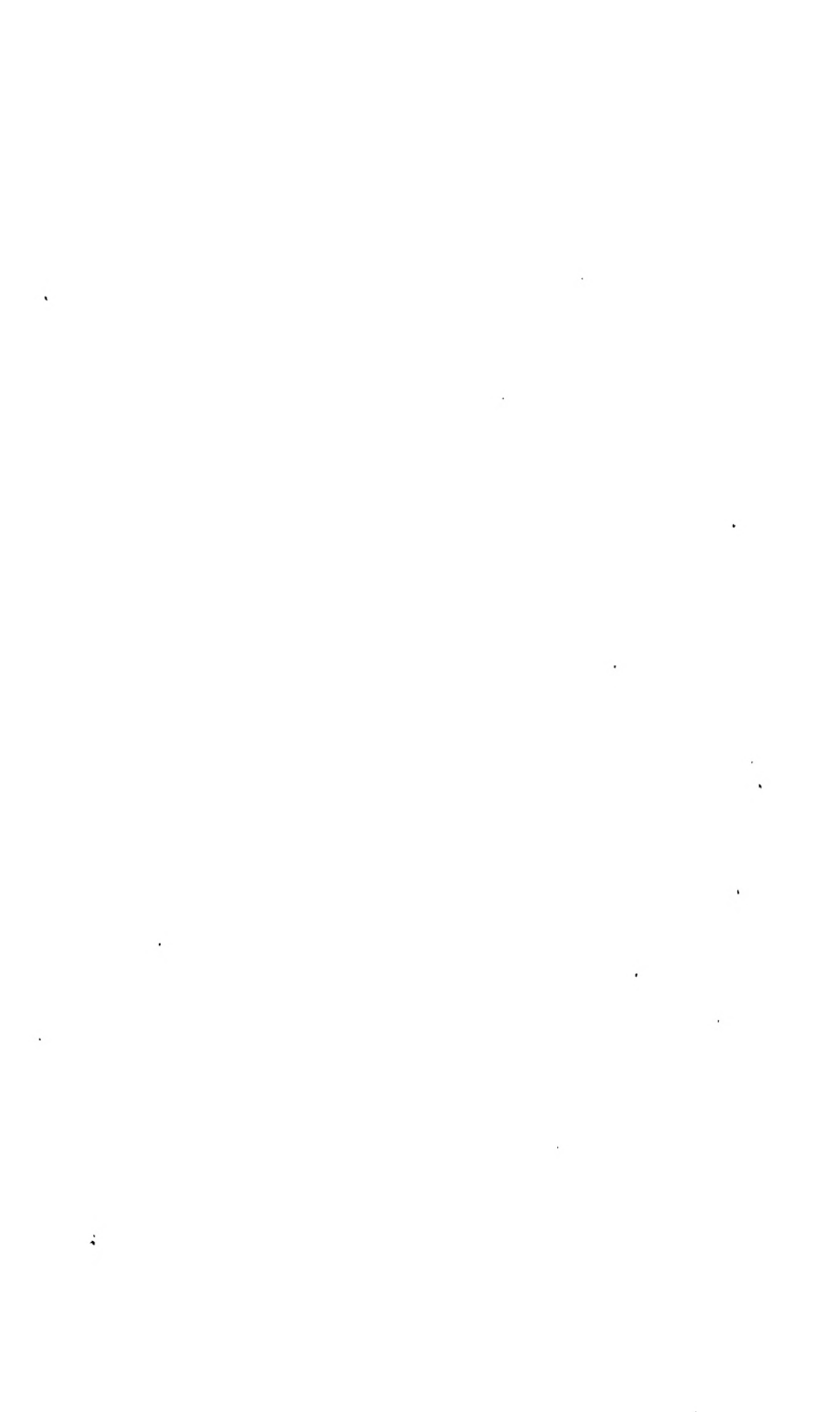
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**VOL. 25**

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# MAN IN INDIA

*A Quarterly Record of Anthropological  
Science with Special Reference to India*

*Founded by SARAT CHANDRA ROY*

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A CYCLE OF FOLK-SONGS

*By Devendra Satyarthi*

THE ART OF THE KOTHI

*By James Walton*

RIVER SONGS OF BHAGALPUR

*By Edwin Prideaux*

THE PARDHAN WOMAN

*By Shamrao Hivale*

THE FORCIBLE MARRIAGE

*By W. G. Archer*

MARRIAGE AMONG THE DRAVIDIANS

*By L. A. Krishna Iyer*

TWO BONDG MURDERERS

*By Verrier Elwin*

NOTES AND QUERIES

REVIEWS

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*Edited by*

RAMESH CHANDRA ROY

W. G. ARCHER

VERRIER ELWIN

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CHARMS FROM CHHATTISGARH  
PARDHAN IDEAS ABOUT WITCHCRAFT

*By Shanrao Hivale*

THE CULT OF THE CLAN GODS  
*By Christoph von Furer-Harrmendorf*

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TWO FOLK-TALES ABOUT WITCHES

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*By W. J. Culshaw*

THE HILL-TRIBES OF TRAVANCORE

*By Krishna Iyer*

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# MAN IN INDIA

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VERRIER ELWIN

MAN IN INDIA was founded in 1921 by Sarat Chandra Roy, a scholar of profound learning, infinite patience, the widest sympathies, whose reputation was international. He conducted the journal with courage and enterprise for twenty years. After his death, a editorial board was formed to continue the journal task of furthering Indian ethnography and to keep the memory of its great Founder. In their capacity the Editors look confidently to the support of readers in every part of India. An adventure so long begun must not be allowed to flag.

At the beginning of the twenty-fifth year of its life the Editors are glad to announce that the circulation has been considerably enlarged, and is being used more and more as a reference in anthropology and sociology, as many pages in standard works will testify. The series of publications include books by R. C. Roy, Shamrao Hivale and Verrier

The Editors of *Man in India* at present are soliciting contributions (especially in Europe and America) and an enlarged panel of contributors of original material. The Editors feel these requests as a luxury they would greatly appreciate. Contributors of articles would note carefully the 'To Contributors' printed from time to time on the third page of the cover.

Contributions, together with books for review, should be addressed to the Secretary of the Editors.

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# MAN IN INDIA

Vol. XXV ]

March 1945 New Delhi [No. 1

## COMMENT

SINCE 1872, when Dalton's *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal* was published with a subsidy of ten thousand rupees from Government, the chief impetus towards anthropological research in this country has come from Bengal. It was the Royal Asiatic Society of Bengal that made the first collection of ethnographic and skeletal specimens, handing them over in 1875 to the Indian Museum, to the foundation of which the Society's influence largely contributed. In the Indian Museum Anthropology suffered varying fortunes. Although separate departments were established for Geology, Archeology and Botany, the anthropological specimens were moved from one department to another, even through the Industrial Section, until they came to rest in a combined Zoological and Anthropological Section. In 1916 this was constituted as the Zoological Survey of India and an anthropologist was attached to its staff. This somewhat emphatic reminder that human beings are only a branch of the animal kingdom has continued to the present day, a thing that was never intended by the authorities of the time. We understand that the Trustees of the Indian Museum and Dr Annandale, whose interest in Anthropology was profound, intended that as soon as public interest in the subject had sufficiently developed, an independent Anthropological Survey of India should be established.

Such interest, however, was slow in coming. *Man in India* was founded in 1921 but for years had only a small circulation. The Universities did not take easily to the new science. Gradually, however, matters improved. A Department of Anthropology was established in the University of Calcutta; the subject was included as a post-graduate study in the

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Universities of Bombay, Lucknow and Mysore. Recently the Universities of Allahabad and Madras have decided to begin work in Anthropology. Indeed by 1933, when Colonel Sewell, F.R.S., relinquished his post as Director of the Zoological Survey he was able to recommend that the time had come for the creation of an independent Anthropological Survey. Yet even now, twelve years later, little notice has been taken of his recommendations. In the meantime, moreover, public interest has considerably enlarged. The work of Mr J. P. Mills as Hon. Ethnographer to the Government of Assam, the foundation of the Indian Anthropological Institute and the Indian Folklore Society, the publication of the Grigson Report and a series of monographs on individual tribes, the investigations of the Gujarat Research Society, the work of the Calcutta anthropologists in the Bengal famine, even the controversies about the Partially Excluded Areas and missionary proselytization of the aboriginals, have all helped to keep anthropology alive in the public mind. The new enthusiasm for the subject is seen even in the largely increased circulation of this Journal in spite of its heavy wartime subscription.

But the work done in the anthropological field and the interest roused has so far been largely personal and quite haphazard. India lacks that massive scientific assault on her social and religious institutions that has so long been a feature of intellectual life in other parts of the world. In the Zoological Survey, there is—as we have said—only one anthropologist. The Ethnographic Survey, established during Lord Curzon's Viceroyalty, lasted only four years (1905—09) and the valuable work it did came to an end when its Director, Sir Herbert Risley, was transferred. But in Africa and the Pacific it would now be inconceivable for any 'backward' area to be settled and developed without the active assistance of anthropologists. The great anthropological surveys conducted by the Academies of Sciences

in Leningrad and Moscow undoubtedly made an important contribution towards the unification of Russia with the magnificent results that are written on the pages of history. In America the administration is now doing its best to atone for past mistakes in its treatment of the Red Indians. The Federal Government at Washington maintains an important Bureau of Ethnology for conducting systematic surveys of the Indian tribes. The great American Museums, such as the Natural History Museum of New York and the Field Museum of Chicago, have separate departments of anthropology and there are large independent institutions exclusively devoted to anthropological research, such as the Peabody Museum of Harvard and Yale and the Heye Foundation of New York. Yet here in India, with its vast population, its scores of communities living at every possible stage of development and speaking over two hundred different languages, its twenty-five million aboriginals whose administration presents one of the most difficult and delicate problems of modern times, there is virtually no official scientific research at all and such anthropologists as work for Government are usually employed on an honorary basis.

In the judgment of *Man in India* the time has come for the Government of India to establish a separate Anthropological Survey of India as part of its scheme for post-war reconstruction. The most grandiose plans for scientific research are being considered. Every aspect of man's material environment is to be investigated: only Man himself is being ignored. Yet the lesson of history is emphatic; an exclusive emphasis on the physical sciences and neglect of the social, psychological and moral side of human life ends only in destruction. In India, both for the credit of science and for the well-being of the population—especially of the tribal population—the establishment of the Anthropological Survey is an urgent necessity.

V. E.

# A CYCLE OF FOLK-SONGS

BY DEVENDRA SATYARTHI

## I

### MOTHER EARTH

Mother Earth, lamp-black you have put in your eyes  
And vermillion in the parting of your hair  
Wearing the green you stand  
O you have charmed the whole world.

Bundelkhandi

## II

### THE PLOUGH

O plough, I salute your hands  
O plough, I salute your feet  
The sal tree I praise for you are made of its wood  
May you be ever strong  
May you be ready for work.

Saora, Orissa

## III

### DEW DROPS ON THE BAMBOO LEAF

O dew drops, sleeping on the bamboo leaf,  
Drying up the sleeping dew drops, O sun !

Tamil

## IV

### THE VILLAGE GOD

' Village, O village ! ', cries out the village-god  
The village is fast asleep  
' Riding in your womb I came, O village  
O you don't reply to my first call.'

Bhojpuri

## V

### BUT THAT'S NOT THE WAY

I would rock you in my arms, my ear-ring, O my ear-ring  
You are the prince from Delhi, arrived at Lahore, arrived  
at Lahore.  
Round your neck a garland of almond-kernels rustles  
as you walk, O it rustles as you walk,  
Tell me if you burnt your toe-tips, O you who would die  
and become ashes, O you who would die and become  
ashes.  
Meet me again and again, O mad Mansoor, O my mad  
Mansoor,  
But don't you pass through the court-yard, thief of my  
brinjals, O thief of my brinjals.

What would I cook?—the curry of eggs, the curry of eggs?  
My veil I would lift, but that's not the way, O that's not  
the way.

Kashmiri

## VI

## THE SPINNING-WHEEL

'Ghoon, ghoon, O spinning-wheel  
Should I spin the red roll of carded cotton or not?'  
'Spin, girl, spin.'  
'Far off is my father-in-law's place  
Should I live there or not?'  
'Live, girl, live.'  
'Long, long is my woe  
Should I tell it or not?'  
'Tell, girl, tell.'  
'My husband is a minor  
Should I stay with him or not?'  
'Stay, girl, stay.'

Punjabi

## VII

## THE SISTER OF THE SPINNING-WHEEL

The dark shisham, O mother, the dark shisham  
Of the dark shisham I got my spinning-wheel made  
For it my merchant father liberally paid,  
O who got it ready, mother, O who got it made?  
I took it from the shop and placed in the yard  
People thought the yard was filled with light.  
I took it from there and placed inside  
People thought the lamp was burning bright.  
I took it from there and placed in the street  
Wazir Khan was dazzled as he passed by.  
Don't you fear, Wazir Khan, don't you fear, brother,  
This spinning-wheel has spun your turban.  
The two supports of the wheel are of the kau wood made,  
Having bid good-bye to sisters, brothers now moan!

Punjabi

## VIII

## THE GUEST

My cat drank all my milk  
My *ghee* I gave to my gods  
O my new guest  
Simple rice-meal I'll give you.

Kuluee

## IX

## AT MIDNIGHT COME, O BEE

At midnight come to the flower-woodland, O bee  
 At midnight come to the flower-woodland.  
 I will light the lamp of the moon  
 All the night I will keep awake  
 To dew-drops I will tell tales, O bee  
 At midnight come to the flower-woodland.

Should I drop asleep  
 I shall tread the path of dreams towards you  
 Come with silent steps, O bee  
 At midnight come to the flower-woodland.

See your song stops not  
 See your sleep breaks not  
 See the flowers' sleep breaks not  
 See the twigs' sleep breaks not, O bee  
 At midnight come to the flower-woodland.

Bengali

## X

## MOTHER ALONE GRIEVES

My life is gone for good  
 My funeral pyre burns in the shade  
 Among all my relations  
 My mother alone grieves.

Marathi

## XI

## ONE FOR YOU, ONE FOR ME

On the hill-top stands a jaru tree  
 And flowers blossom on the jaru tree  
 One flower for you, my girl,  
 One flower for me.

On the hill-top stands a mango tree  
 And the pollen blossoms on the mango tree  
 One pollen-blossom for you, my dandy  
 One pollen-blossom for me.

On the hill-top stands a mahua tree  
 And flowers blossom on the mahua tree  
 One flower for you, my girl  
 One flower for me.

Khond

## XII

## SONG OF THE BROTHER

The moon has come above us in the sky,  
 The constellations are fading, fading,  
 Sister, now come home,  
 Else mother will beat you, beat you.  
 The grandfather will abuse you,  
 And your elder brother will stop him, stop him :  
 ' Don't you abuse this sister mine,  
 My sister is a sparrow, sparrow,  
 She'll fly away today,  
 Or tomorrow at dawn she'll fly away, fly away ;  
 Another four days of Savan, she is with us,  
 Then the son-in-law will carry her, carry her.'

Rajasthani

## XIII

## THE YOUNG WIFE

On the moon shall I raise crops,  
 On the sun shall I make my threshing-floor,  
 My breasts shall serve as bullocks,  
 My husband must take them out to graze at midnight,  
 O the rains of Sawan and Bhado are pouring down.

Bundelkhandi

## XIV

## SONG OF THE DAUGHTER

Birds bring their offerings up  
 To adorn the boughs of their trees  
 Ah me, it is to adorn another's home  
 With cherished love and care my mother brought me up.

Assamese

## XV

## INSIDE HER VEIL

In the gem-studded cup burns the *ghee*  
 On the fireplace burns the kesar sweet  
 Inside her veil burns the beautiful woman  
 Her husband is a thorough fool.

Bangru

## XVI

## THE PEOPLE OF THE HILLS

Sinners are the people of the hills  
 Their hearts are made of stones  
 Rarely their body will touch our body  
 But their eyes meet our eyes daily.

Kangri



## XVII

## ANGRY WOMAN

Your betel-nut, O I won't take,  
 Your betel-leaf, O I won't take,  
 A tramp like you I'll love no more.  
 A tramp's love is a jar of earthenware,  
 It breaks and none can put in repair.

Bengali

## XVIII

## THREE LULLABIES

## i

My baby is a juicy grape  
 It has been granted me from Allah's garden.

## ii

My baby is a star of heaven  
 Allah has blessed my lap with it.

## iii

My baby is a rose among flowers  
 My eyes find comfort whenever they see it.

Pashto

## XIX

## ANOTHER LULLABY

A tiny lamp lightens the whole house  
 The moon lightens the whole sky  
 A tiny lamp lightens the whole palace  
 My baby lightens the pupil of my eye.

Telugu

## XX

## THE SAD DAUGHTER-IN-LAW

My roll of carded cotton won't finish,  
 My thread won't break,  
 And my mother-in-law won't say : ' Go and fetch water.'

Kangri

## XXI

## THE PEACOCK DANCE

O peacock, who gave you your beautiful dance ?  
 Who gave colours to your beautiful plumage ?

O peacock, teach my love to dance like you,  
 O like a peahen I will kiss his neck.

O sister, the peacock would not listen to me,  
 Lo ! fast he flies away from my side.

Khond

## XXII

## THE PEACOCK'S COMPLAINT

' Eat this *ilwa* grass and the boiled rice,  
 O you peacock, with your back bent down ! '—  
 You said, O didn't you ?  
 O ever I lived on insects that I picked up  
 With my claws from places where lay bits of broken  
     earthenware and pieces of axed wood,  
 O ever I quenched my thirst on water collected in pits  
     on rocks or in holes dug with claws by me,—  
 Uttering *ke*, the peacock flew away.

Saora, Orissa

## RAJPUT WAR SONGS

## XXIII

Thus speaks the hero Kushla Singh—  
 ' Why dost thou weep, O Bikaner Fort ?  
 If thou art destroyed in my presence  
 The sun will forget to rise.'

## XXIV

The shell awaits the fall of the heavenly dew,  
 The *chakai* bird awaits the rising sun  
 The Rajput awaits the renewal of the battle  
 And the damsel awaits the man who is brave.

## XXV

The lions make no distinction  
 Between their own and the foreign land  
 Any forest where they roam  
 At once to them becomes their home.

## XXVI

These are your companions, my hero,  
 A stout heart, a sharp sword, and a strong hand  
 Which will you hold superior, tell me,  
 When you go to the war ?

## XXVII

All other music is only a series of tunes,  
 Maru Râg is like a king :  
 It should be sung  
 When warriors saddle their horses.

## XXVIII

Wounded by swords, here lies my brave husband,  
 Innumerable stitches are seen on his limbs :  
 Stop, O Minstrel, your song of chivalry,  
 Lest he runs to the battle with green wounds.

## MAN IN INDIA

## XXIX

O armour-maker, please remember to make  
 Rather a loose armour for my husband,—  
 Lest it is fastened tightly  
 When his body, blossoming like a lotus, becomes fuller.

## XXX

Sister, I can endure pains one and all  
 But two things ever burn me  
 A son who shames my milk  
 The husband who fails to save the honour of my bangles.

## XXXI

'Give me water soon,' he says  
 How can I serve him first?  
 My mother-in-law carries water  
 According to their wounds she serves the wounded warriors.

## XXXII

Forbid me not to feed my horse on *ghee*  
 My horse will help me when I run after my enemy.

## XXXIII

Who feeds the deer on *ghee*?  
 O they live on grass  
 Faster than your horse  
 They ever run, my hero.

## XXXIV

With your throbbing sound go on, O drum,  
 Make me a good wife of my husband  
 Bring me honour in public  
 Save my respect that I got from women of my neighbourhood.

## XXXV

Rathore women are eminent  
 Their sons are never commonplace  
 Their husbands never run back from the battle  
 They never bear sons who would run back.

## XXXVI

The opium jumps up from big cups,  
 The saffron jumps up from above the saddle of the elephant  
 While going to that home—the field of battle, my love,—  
 One shouldn't think that his head is with him.

## XXXVII

In days of peace and joy  
 With delicate arms he caresses me  
 At the call of war songs his body gets stiff  
 Rushing to the battle he even forgets to wear his armour.

## XXXVIII

You said my breasts were stiff  
Coarsely they struck against your body  
Now how is that sword-blows in the battle  
You take for a soft touch of flowers ?

## XXXIX

My warrior husband is an innocent woman's pitcher  
Like a *sati*'s coconut he shares the fight  
Single-handed he goes to face the enemy  
O how should I hope for his safe return ?

## XL

Sister, we live amidst enemies  
Swords ever strike up and down on one another  
Tell me for how many days  
The martial bliss will be my guest ?

## XLI

My husband stands in the battle-field with one foot placed  
on the stirrup  
Enemy soldiers have surrounded him  
At a critical moment as such, he turns not  
His attention from twirling his moustache.

## XLII

At every foot lies a spear  
At every foot lie the fallen shields  
Bibi, the Khan's queen, asks her husband—  
How many Jagmals are there in the world ?

## XLIII

Give birth to a son, mother  
A mighty hero, O he must be another Pratap  
Taking the Rana for a snake at his bedside  
Akbar's sleep is disturbed at night.

## XLIV

God, you felt so proud  
After the creation of the horse  
One mistake you made  
You didn't make a saddle too yourself.

## XLV

The horse neighs at our door, my love,  
Brave warriors have come and they call upon you  
Here is a hero's bracelet, wear it and go  
Lo ! the call comes from the war drum.

## XLVI

Dye not my feet, pray dye not, barber's wife !  
 Tomorrow begins the battle, I hear :  
 If my husband dies fighting  
 Do come and dye my feet with the deep red.

## XLVII

The Hada Rajputs are great in fierce battle  
 The Gaurs are great in the feats of the sword  
 The Devras are great in persistence  
 The Rathores make matchless heroes.

## XLVIII

Don't be afraid of me, O innocent soldier,  
 Tradition has taught the Charans  
 To address the cowards who run back  
 Beating them with our hunter-like satirical songs.

## XLIX

With pearls we shall worship  
 The arms of our heroes, sister  
 Safe and woundless they have brought their arms  
 Answering the enemy soldiers' blows.

## L

Such a mare you cannot buy anywhere  
 This mare directly comes from the Heaven  
 Talk slowly, more slowly, my hero brother,  
 Lest my mare suddenly flies towards the Heaven.

## LI

Make me a pigeon of Jagat Singh's palace, O God,  
 Water I'll drink from the Pichhola tank, and the royal  
     granary will ever welcome me.

## LII

The horses are the same, villages are the same  
 Same food, same people  
 But the spirit of the Rajputs their *Rām*  
 Comes down once for all, O Noplā.

## LIII

Rajputs have gone, only the shams are left  
 One and all, they are traitors  
 Old Rajput women have all gone  
 Else they could bear the ancient types.

## LIV

Be a tiller of the soil, O Charan,  
Learn to love the plough  
Perform now the burial of your songs  
Let all your songs lie under the dust.

Rajasthani

## LV

## THE MONEY-LENDER

One who knows you, now knows  
Your ways, O money-lender,  
Blood you drink unfiltered  
Water you filter before you drink.

Rajasthani

## LVI

## THE SARKAR'S PROFFER

Mulberries are ripe and prunes are blackening !  
O what care we for the Sarkar's proffered flood ?

Pashto

## LVII

## ENGLISHMAN'S RAJ

The leaves of the pipal are ever-moving ;  
In the Englishman's Raj we are ever unquiet, hungrily  
In the Englishman's Raj, O friend.

Chhattisgarhi

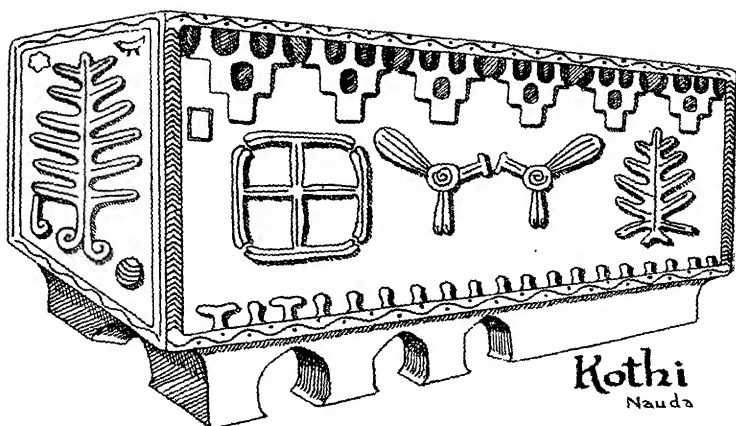
# THE ART OF THE KOTHI

BY JAMES WALTON

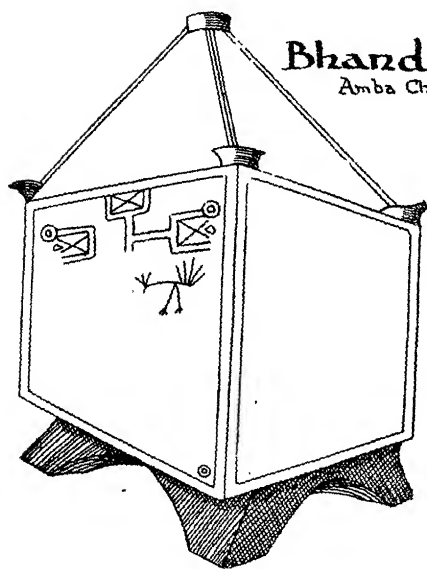
WITH the advent of so-called 'civilization' in a community general artistic ability appears almost universally to deteriorate and gradually becomes the province of a few specialists. In any primitive group each member takes a delight in creating his own personal effects and household belongings which he usually adorns with simple but expressive pattern. Contact with a more advanced society results in richly decorated home-made products being replaced by cheap, tawdry substitutes from the nearest bazaar or by the products of specialist craftsmen. Whether this is a desirable condition I do not propose to discuss. No doubt specialization which results in craftsmanship does raise the standard of work produced but whether the loss of creative artistic ability among the general people is offset by this improved standard I cannot decide. It is certainly not offset by the purchase of cheap mass-produced goods in the bazaar.

Contact with Hindu society, like any other society, has produced this result, so that, apart from in the artisan classes artistic ability has been submerged. Here and there, however, among the general populace the desire to create and design still finds expression. It is revealed in mural paintings, particularly in Rajputana, in mural symbolic motifs over a wide area and throughout the Hindu social scale, and in the construction of domestic furnishings. Among the Rajputs, Jats and other high caste farming communities of Southern Malwa interior furnishing is usually confined to one or more store chests, particularly *Kothi*, which are used for storing the various crops. These are made of a mixture of clay and chopped straw and their construction is the domain of the housewife who often, particularly in Rajput families, enriches them with crude but refreshing relief patterns. These patterns have all the spontaneous freedom of primitive art and represent a lingering creative artistic desire which has otherwise been lost.

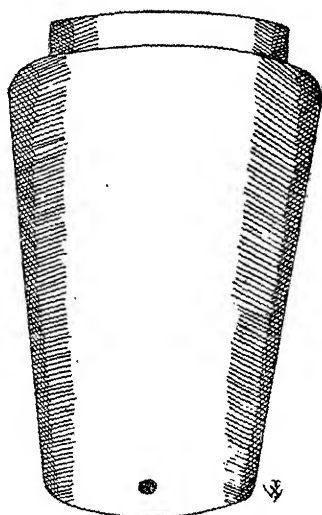
The type of *Bhandara* or *Kothi* varies according to its purpose but it is in the nature of the *Kothi* that the character of the housewife is revealed. Where it is neatly made and freely decorated, then the woman is invariably house-proud. Bright mutti walls, cleanly swept floors and polished brassware are its associates. Generally it is a rectangular chest set on short sturdy feet resembling the 'kist' of the English farmer and serving in the same manner to store that part of the harvest which is being retained for the use of the family. Once the winnowed grain has been placed within the *Kothi* the top is sealed up and the wheat or other grain is extracted as required through a small hole at the bottom. An alternative form in use in the same area is the *Bomkia*, a large truncated cone whose sides slope outwards towards the top and which is often six to eight feet in height. To the south, in the Vindhya, the Bhils use a somewhat similar basket-work granary,



Kothi  
Nauda



Bhandara  
Amba Chandan



Bomkia  
Depalpur

Rajput  
Granaries



or *Kabla*, whilst still farther south in the Nimar Plain a cylindrical basket-work structure sealed with clay and roofed with a conical thatch serves the same purpose.

It is in the Rajput home that the *Kothi* reaches its highest development, often as many as six such store chests being found in one house. Some are used as granaries, others, square in shape and fitted with doors, are general store cupboards or *Bhandara*, but all are richly ornamented and neatly made. They are the most important feature of the house—the only items in an otherwise empty room, apart from miscellaneous oddments hanging on the walls.

The decorative motifs applied to the *Kothi* are more or less similar throughout a wide area. A plantain tree, a peacock, some form of swastik or satia, a cobra and the moon are the main units employed. What is the significance of this pattern? Everywhere, even by older people, I have been told that it is solely decorative but the symbols employed and their universal application over a wide area indicate that, whatever its function today, in the past it certainly served some additional purpose. It appears to have three main functions. Firstly, purely decorative, comparable to the rich woodcarving displayed on mediaeval European wooden corn 'kists,' secondly protective and thirdly supplicatory. The snake, moon and satia or swastik fall into the second class whilst the plantain and peacock belong to the third group. Both the plantain and the peacock display prolific reproduction and so they are placed on the *Kothi* with the implied wish that just as they multiply abundantly so may the crops be bountiful. The peacock may have an added significance for its feathers are commonly employed to avert the evil eye. The snake is generally regarded as a guardian of hidden treasure and so it is appropriately employed here whilst the moon also serves a similar purpose. G. W. Briggs states of the Chamars that, 'In the grain-bin which has a hole in the side near the bottom for taking out the grain, a sun symbol, for protection, consisting of a circle with covered radii, is sometimes drawn.'<sup>1</sup> The swastik or satia is associated with Bhumia, the protector of the crops, and is a request for his blessing on the harvest. It takes on a variety of forms but is almost always present.

These patterns are moulded in relief or incized according to the fancy of their creator. The querns stand on the top and are often covered with a neat lid of mutti. Here, then, is a relic of primitive art surviving among the high caste Rajputs in districts close to modern influences. In every other aspect of life commodities are either purchased from the bazaars or made by the village artisans but in the *Kothi* creative ability is still displayed and the artistic desire fully expressed. The significance of the designs may have been lost but the beauty of bold pattern is still appreciated.

<sup>1</sup> G. W. Briggs, *The Chamars* (Calcutta 1920), p. 176.

# RIVER SONGS OF BHAGALPUR <sup>1</sup>

BY E. T. PRIDEAUX

## I

Kosi and her sisters are all five virgins  
O Kamla have the chariot brought  
One sister dwells in the eastern land  
Her name is Kausalya Dai  
O Kamla have the chariot brought  
One sister dwells in the western land  
Her name is Bihula Dai  
O Kamla have the chariot brought  
One sister lives in the northern land  
Her name is Sursair Dai  
O Kamla have the chariot brought  
One sister lives in the southern land  
Her name is Ganga Dai  
Where does Mother Kamleshwari flow ?  
And where flows the Balan ?  
In Tirhut flows Mother Kamleshwari  
In Tirhut flows the Balan  
With how much water flows Mother Kamleshwari ?  
With how much water Balan ?  
With very much water flows Mother Kamleshwari  
Shallow and swiftly flows Balan  
What shall I offer to Mother Kamleshwari ?  
What shall I offer Balan ?  
*Pān* and flowers I'll offer Kamleshwari  
A she-kid I'll offer Balan  
Thus sings thy servant with folded hands  
Help him in his times of trouble.

## II

Where flows Mother Kosika ? Where flows river Balan ?  
In Purnea district flows Kosika Mother  
In Alapur pargana ghostly Balan  
With how much water flows Kosika Mother ?  
With how much water ghostly Balan ?  
With very much water flows Mother Kosika  
Shallow and swiftly flows ghostly Balan  
What shall I offer to Mother Kosika ?  
What shall I offer to ghostly Balan ?  
*Pān* and flowers I'll offer Mother Kosika  
A pigeon and she-kid to ghostly Balan.

## III

Amoli and Jamoli sleep in the shade of a kadam tree  
The pitambar cloth of the sleeping Babu flutters

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<sup>1</sup> Recorded in North Bhagalpur, Bihar, in 1941.

' Rise, rise, Babu, and bathe  
 Your worshipper stands at the door ; give him divine help.'  
 ' I will not arise ; I will not bathe  
 Nor will I help, Mother, the devotee  
 Let him seek another door.  
 He has eaten threshed *achat* rice  
 And drunk the pitcher of clear water  
 And put on a Chanaba dhoti  
 Let him seek another door.'  
 ' From hunger he's eaten the *achat* rice  
 From thirst he has drunk the pitcher's water  
 And naked has put on the Chanaba dhoti  
 So rise up, rise, and help your devotee.  
 Thus sings, Mother, your servant, with folded hands ;  
 If you help him in his time of trouble  
 He will recite your name for ever.'

## IV

Hear my prayer, Mother Kosi, with heaving waves  
 Cleaving the hills you made your stream, river matchlessly  
     strong  
 On your boundless expanse boats ply all the year  
 Cutting the high places you have made hollows  
 The hollows you have filled with sand  
 You have made the wicked poor, cattle you sustain  
 Because you grow grass as fodder for cows  
 Of all pilgrimages yours is supreme, obliterator of sin  
 You exalt those who, in despair, go to you for shelter.  
 Daljit cries with folded hands  
 ' Give to me succour.'

## V

Kosika, boundless your grandeur  
 I cannot stay quiet, my heart is trembling, at sight of your  
     dreadful stream  
 It leaps, it roars, somewhere a smooth deep flow  
 Fearful passengers in the boat cry out  
 The boatman himself, with pole and oar, is confused  
 Swarms of ants passing ! Crocodiles hissing !  
 In the stream thousands of alligators and man-eating crocodiles !  
 Upturned boats grounded ! Piled-up wood on the banks !  
 In homes, wild pigs make havoc—care nothing for our shouts  
 For miles are grass reed jungles  
 The peasant despairs at the scrub and white sand  
 Trees, bamboos, houses, fields—all are washed away.  
 Prays Trilok, ' Pity the poor people whose land has thus been  
     destroyed.'

## VI

Only last night you came, Rano, bringing home your bride  
 You slept undisturbed in your bridal room  
 How slept you undisturbed, Rano, with Kosi's stream flowing  
 past the door ?

Sitting near his head Kosika wakens him  
 Sleeping Rano startles up

'How can one sleep at peace, Rano, when Kosi's stream is  
 at the door ?'

He hears these words and starts from his sleep

A dhoti under his arm and a tooth-twig in his hand, Rano  
 sets out to bathe

Rano, your mother forbids—your father warns you—not to  
 bathe in the Kosi

He pays no heed to the warnings, but goes to bathe in the Kosi

Rano takes one dip, then another, in the third he is swept away

When thou, O Kosika, sweetest away even Rano, I will bring  
 a spade of eighty maunds

A spade of eighty maunds and a handle of eighty-four maunds—  
 To drop heaps of earth in your way.

## VII

Hasten, hasten, O Sarkar ! People all are washed away

In the mid-stream of Kosi

East and South of Nirmali nothing has any worth

Fathers and sons die of hunger ; they beg from door to door

Homestead and courtyard and family she has taken

She's taken orchards also and given only fevers

Hasten, hasten, O Sarkar ! People all are washed away

In the mid-stream of Kosi

O Lord, hear Kapaleshwar's prayer, give us a thought, Sarkar

Or at the burning ghat all will be found

Hasten, hasten, O Sarkar ! People all are washed away

In the mid-stream of Kosi.

## VIII

After piercing countless mountains you are here, O sacred  
 Kosika

Stretching from Bhawanipur to Nathpur

West of Nathpur a current flows making sky-high waves

From Madhopur to Gobindpur all is glittering water

In Madhopur live Kshatriyas who buy goods to consume

Listen, Wife, in case guests come, arrange to pawn utensils

In Bardaha Badreshwar Nath, the skilled fortune-teller

Lives in his ' barmottar ' land ;

Water flows even through his land ; and he begs from door to  
 door

Let us go, peasants, and have our claims written in the  
Nathpur court.<sup>1</sup>

Shoklal Pleader and Buttan headman are there

Ask the headman for fried 'puris' and the western room to  
dine in

In Nathpur even Nath Kalika was engulfed in mid-stream

Ignoring her strong protests.

## IX

O sacred Kosika, at your feet I pray

How to describe your world renown

Great men watch you ; sages take your waters

Bathe there and meditate : this is the proof

Hear my prayer, O Mother, do not delay

Free me from my overburdening troubles.

## X

Whence comes Kosi Mother ? Where does she take her course ?

Where does Kosi Mother break down the brick-built house ?

Breaking thousands of mountains Sacred Kosi comes

In Tirhut is her course, and there she breaks the brick-  
built house

East and West you flow eight miles wide

Mother, make another stream

Ahead go grasses ; then comes bushy scrub

After breaking the brick-built house you bring in grass  
and bushes

And make the cows content

You make cows content, O Kosi Mother

You make the world happy and break down pride

Many you have broken, Mother ; many you have raised

O Kosi Mother, in Tirhut your name is reputed

Fifty-six hundred gods your name has abased

Your reputation spreads, O Kosi Mother

Thus sings thy servant with folded hands

Help him in his times of trouble.

## XI

East of the Kamla and West of the Kosi

There is no woman like Gango

'Where have you bathed, Gango ? Where did you comb your  
hair ?

Where did you make your sixteen adornments ?'

'In the Ganges I bathed ; in Tirhut I combed my hair.'

'Why did you bathe, O Gango ? Why did you comb your hair  
And make your sixteen adornments ?'

<sup>1</sup> The reference is to the Kosi Diara Survey on the Purnea-Bhagalpur border.

'For virtue I bathed ; for my hair's coil I combed it  
And made my sixteen adornments.'

'Were you, O Gango, cast in a mould ?  
Did a goldsmith fashion you ?'

'No, my servant, I was not cast in a mould  
Nor did a goldsmith fashion me :  
In my mother's womb, O Ranpal, was I conceived  
And God gave me such a form.'

## XII

I have plucked flowers and filled my baskets  
I am waiting for Kamla to come  
This way will come Mother Kamlesri  
The sound of cymbals and tabor is heard  
I have sung, O Mother, and ask with folded hands  
Your help in times of trouble.<sup>1</sup>

## XIII

Sitting on a bed against the wall Mother Kamla watches  
Kamla is watching the way for the Lord  
'Whence, Mother Kamla, can I get some sandalwood  
Whence get a carpenter ?'  
'From Morang, O Kamla, get sandalwood, get the carpenter  
from Tirhut'  
'With what shall I have the sandalwood cut ?  
With what make wooden shoes ?'  
'With a saw you will shape the sandalwood  
With an adze shape wooden shoes.'

## XIV

'What is your caste, O traveller ? What is your name ?'  
'I am of good Koulhu caste, old woman ; my parents named me  
Koila'  
'I will give you the first offerings, hero Koila ; become, O  
Koila, my charioteer'  
'You have asked me my caste, old woman—tell me your own'  
'By caste I am a Brahmin's daughter ; my parents named me  
Kamla  
For you an eighty-maund spade, Koila, with an eighty-four  
maund handle  
Slim of waist, Koila, broad-chested and wide-shouldered  
There is no man like you ; you are the charioteer, Koila.'  
  
Ahead, Koila throws up heaps of earth  
Behind, Kamla makes her chiefest stream  
In all directions Koila comes conquering  
Only Balkar unconquered stays.

<sup>1</sup> Kamla, like Balan, is a river whose presence means good crops.  
Kamlesri is Kamla.

## XV

From the East calls out the rising Sun-God

‘Awake, awake, God Koila’

But proud Koila wakens not  
Koila combs and ties his tresses.

From the North shouts Raja Bhimsen

‘Awake, awake, God Koila’

Still proud Koila wakens not  
Koila combs and ties his tresses.

From the West shouts Kartal Moni,

‘Awake, awake, God Koila’

Still proud Koila wakens not  
Koila combs and ties his tresses.

From the South shout Ganga and Hanuman

‘Awake, awake, God Koila’

Still proud Koila wakens not  
Koila combs and ties his tresses.

From Heaven Indra shouts

‘Awake, awake, God Koila’

Still proud Koila wakens not  
Koila combs and ties his tresses

From the Earth's core shouts Basuki Kshatra Mani

‘Awake, awake, God Koila.’

## XVI

From the Palace of Indra returned Mother Kamla and came  
to the mortal world

In this world lives Padma, the gardener; at his door Mother  
Kamla stood

‘A lodging, a lodging, Padma gardener. A strange guest  
stands at your door.’

In one hand a jar of clear water, in the other a cushioned seat.  
‘Wash your feet, sit on the cushion. Mother Kamla, how  
have you fared?’

‘My journey was safe. Tell me your news, Padma.’

‘Why do you ask me my news, Mother? My garden withered  
twelve years ago.’

‘Suppose, Padma gardener, your garden flowers, how will you  
worship me?’

‘If my garden flowers, O Mother Kamla, I will worship with  
betel leaves and with flowers.’

As Mother Kamla entered with nectar, every branch burst  
into leaf

'It is dawn, the Sun has risen. See your garden of flowers.'  
Soundly sleeping he started up, and entered the garden rubbing  
his eyes

He raised his eyes and looked, and looking was amazed  
Plucking the first flower he worshipped God  
The second he offered to Kamla Mother  
Plucking the third he travels the world.

## XVII

In mid-tank, O Kamla, is a sandal tree  
Beneath it, Mother, is your abode  
What have they cut to make your house, Mother?  
Of what have they made its door?  
They have cut bamboos and bound them with canes  
They have fitted it with doors of gold  
Which day, O Mother, will they worship there?  
On Saturday, Mother, I have lit the light  
On Sunday the worship will start  
In that temple rests Kamla and her sisters five in all  
While Koila waves the hair fan  
In those corners, O Kamla, they perform your worship  
One corner Koila forcibly occupies.

## XVIII

It is dawn, Kamla, and the Cuckoo calls  
As she hears it call she sweeps the house  
And gathers the dust in heaps  
The knot breaks, Kamla, the brush-sticks scatter  
Over the scattered sticks Kamla begins to cry.  
Do not cry, do not sob, O Kamla Virgin  
In the morning we'll call the goldsmith  
Golden brush-sticks, Kamla, a knot of silver.

Thus sings your servant, Mother, with folded hands  
Forgive, forgive, Mother, his many faults.



# THE PARDHAN WOMAN

BY SHAMRAO HIVALE

THE Pardhan attitude to women is summarized in a remarkable statement once made to me by the great priest-magician Dani. 'In the course of a single day, a woman appears in many different forms. When she comes out of the house early in the morning with an empty pot on her head she is a sight of ill-omen. Anyone starting on a journey, going for a betrothal and especially any Pardhan setting out on a Mangteri tour,<sup>1</sup> decides not to travel on that day if he sees her, for in this form her name is Khapara-dhari, an evil spirit carrying a broken bit of earthenware.

'But within a few minutes the woman returns with a pot full of water and now she is Mata Kalsahin, the best and most auspicious of goddesses. The Pardhan who sees her then is ready to worship her. He throws a pice into the pot and goes on his tour full of hope and with a singing heart.

'The woman reaches the house and begins to sweep the kitchen. Now she is the goddess Bahiri-Batoran, who removes cholera from the village. But when she comes out to sweep the courtyard and the lane in front of her house, she sinks into a common sweeper-woman. In a moment, however, she changes again, for she goes into the cow-shed and becomes Mata Lakshmi, the goddess of wealth and good fortune.

'Now it is time to serve the family with food and again her nature changes and she becomes Mata Anna-Kuari, the goddess of grain.

'In the evening she has to light the lamps in the house and now she is Mata Dia-Motin, the goddess who shines like a pearl. This done, she feeds her child and gently fans him to sleep and as she does this she becomes Mata Chawar-Motin.

'And then last of all she appears at night as the insatiate lover who must be satisfied. Now she is the goddess who swallows her man just as Lanka was swallowed in the flames by Lanka-Dahin.'

The Pardhan in fact regards woman at once with reverence, admiration, cynicism and amusement. The virtue in her that he admires most is that which is most conspicuously absent in his own character, the virtue of chastity and fidelity. In Patangarh stories are still told of a Gond woman who lived many years ago in the village. She never married and never looked on the face of man. She lived for sixty years as a *kanch-kuāri*. 'She was Bhagavan though she was a human being and had breasts and parts and monthly course; yet her *ras* dwelt in her body and never left it. Her sweat and her *ras* dried of its own accord inside her body; so she was called Gad-Dokari. Every day she used to bathe and she lived as a saint.'

<sup>1</sup> The Mangteri is the tour of ceremonial visits made by a Pardhan to Gonds of his own clan. In each house he plays and sings and has the right to claim certain ritual gifts.

A Pardhan woman, Pusia by name, determined to imitate her when she saw the great reverence in which people held her. But life was too strong for her and soon after she had begun her saintly life she ran away with a lover. She became pregnant and returned repentant to the village. It is said that she was very beautiful and sang and danced like a *phitkari* bird. Many tried to win her, but she never looked on the face of man again. Both these women are frequently mentioned and always with the greatest admiration. Few, however, reach this standard and I think the ordinary Pardhan does not consider it desirable that they should.

We may consider Pardhan woman under various headings, as a member of society, as a wife and lover, as a mother and as a grandmother. As a member of society, she holds a position of dignity and freedom. It is true that she cannot normally hold or inherit property, but there are many exceptions to this rule. It is all a matter of personality. A vigorous and determined widow, with an ample store of picturesque abuse, may succeed in retaining her husband's possessions. Indeed, it is said that so long as she does not re-marry, she has a very good chance of resisting her male relations-in-law. But once she re-marries, she is generally forced to hand over to them even such small and valueless objects as axes or sickles.

In the ordinary affairs of daily life the functions of man and woman are somewhat strictly demarcated. A woman must not make a plough or use one. She must not make a bed or weave the strings across it. It is safer for her not to tie up bundles. Except on ceremonial occasions she must not wear a turban or the special loin-cloth of men. She must not speak at a meeting of the village elders. She must not thatch the roof of a house or even climb upon it during the month of Sawan. She must not entertain a man if she is alone in the house. An unmarried girl must never spend a night unchaperoned. On the other hand, a woman has the exclusive right or duty of making the earthen grindstone<sup>1</sup> or earthen hearth. It is her business to make and use a fire-pot. Only she may wear the woman's ornaments and clothes. If her husband puts them on, he may be fined by the other villagers.

Some of these rules and restrictions are connected with woman's function as the bearer of children. The prohibition of tying up bundles and weaving the strings of a cot is obviously intended to avoid danger at the time of delivery when, on the principles of sympathetic magic, anything that has been shut up or tied up may be injurious. The rules about the entertainment of visitors are intended to protect a woman's reputation.

<sup>1</sup> If a man makes a grindstone or carries a pot of water on his head, he is called *davki-nandan* (jar of women), *chulha-choda* (hearth-copulator, given to an uxorious husband who sits by the fire watching his wife cook) or *Mahara* (weaver : a caste which remains indoors with the women).

Although women of certain other tribes, notably the Konds and Baigas, are sometimes famous as priestesses, I do not know of any Pardhan woman who has become a Pujari or has performed the functions of a Panda. On the other hand it is quite common for women to be Baruas. Budhiya of Sanhrwachhappar is a well-known Barua and she may often be seen swaying to and fro, jerking her body in trance. Women also accompany and play an important part in supporting their husbands on the Mangteri expeditions, though they do not actually take any share in the ceremonies and songs.

A very common word used to describe a wife is *māl*, property. Woman herself is perhaps the most valuable piece of property that a man can own. This should not, however, be understood as meaning that the Pardhan has a low opinion of woman or looks down upon her. We do not generally, as a matter of fact, despise our most valuable possessions. The feminist may think that it is derogatory for a woman to be possessed by man, but where woman is so free and independent as in Pardhan society, the sense of being possessed is something treasured even by woman herself.

For this freedom is a very real thing. Pardhan women go in groups to the hills and forests for wood and leaves and fruit. They can go to the bazaars without their husbands. They can join freely in the dances. They can initiate the complicated series of activities that lead to a divorce.

As a wife the Pardhan woman is at once a source of supreme delight and intense anxiety to her husband. Whatever else the Pardhans may be, they are not humdrum. A Pardhan lives in perpetual fear of his wife. If she is beautiful and a hard worker, there are many young men who will notice her, and if they are better-looking and have more to give her, the girl may not only have love affairs with them but may leave her husband altogether. 'A wife longs for good clothes and ornaments. Every night she must have sexual excitement. If the husband cannot give it, she accuses him of having secret love-affairs or of not loving her properly. His wife will ruin his reputation when she goes down to the well, for there she will tell the other women how impotent he is.'

We have already seen how the Pardhan admires the virtue of chastity. He has an enormous reverence for the high caste Hindu woman, whom he regards as a Sati. A young Pardhan described a Hindu woman thus: 'Once a Hindu girl is married, her husband knows that she is his as long as he lives. He does not worry every time he goes anywhere for fear she is flirting or will elope with a better-looking man than himself. However badly he may treat her or whatever infidelities he may himself commit, she will remain his. But we poor Pardhans never have peace of mind.' On the other hand, Pardhans are critical of the social and domestic

qualities of the women of the towns. They are believed to cook during the menstrual period. 'They pass wind and relieve themselves in public. They suffer from itch. They do not remove their pubic hairs—and when the midwife goes to them she cannot find her way to the well for the thick grass growing round it. Their clothes are too loose.' And if a town woman does become unfaithful at all, says the Pardhan, she becomes a regular prostitute.

Some husbands treat their wives very brutally and there is a type of Pardhan man who is as possessive and suspicious as any in the world. But generally, Pardhans are very tolerant of their wives, and even when they deceive them or run away with other men, they forgive them and try to bring them back.

I do not want to give the impression that the Pardhan woman is a woman of loose character. Since her sexual freedom within the tribe is more or less socially recognized there is an absence of psychological conflict. If so-called civilized people lived in the same way they might become very degraded, but a Pardhan woman never gives the impression of being loose or immoral. Perhaps it is because she does not sell her favours for money; perhaps it is because, as the Pardhans themselves say, 'If we do not believe a thing to be sin, it is not a sin and does not have the consequence of sin.'

In many cases, indeed, the relations of Pardhan men and women are of an almost ideal character. If a Dasondi<sup>1</sup> has to leave his wife at home, he tells her on the eve of beginning his expedition: 'Go and bathe to-day, for to-morrow I go to the *karam kheti*, the field of fate which only bears a crop if our luck is good.' The wife makes him sit in her lap and feeds him with special food. 'Fie on God,' she says, 'who has given us such a field to till, a field that separates us for months.' They swear to each other that they will be faithful, and as they part he gives her a turban which she will look at daily and keep always clean and ready for his return. She gives him a ring or bangle to remind him of her.

A Dasondi sometimes has to leave his wife in a Gond Thakur's house on the way—if she is not well or unable to continue the journey. Then before he leaves he prays to Bara Pen to keep her in a continual menstrual period so that she will be permanently protected.

As a mother the Pardhan woman is affectionate, careful and industrious. Her delight in a son is unbounded. Her whole life is his. How chill and aloof compared with this is the relation of a sophisticated or Western mother to her child—the feeding bottle, the nurse, the hygienic arrangements of lavatory and

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<sup>1</sup> In his capacity as ritual beggar—this may take him away from home for two or three months—the Pardhan is called Dasondi. The Gond from whom he has a right to beg is called his Thakur.

nursery, the constant absence of the mother in social entertainment or business. Here the child spends his whole time with the mother and her entire energy and life is for him. She is his washerwoman, his sweeper, his first teacher, his chief playmate, his inseparable companion.

There is a drawback to this intense family devotion. It destroys initiative in later life. Children are so attached to their homes that they become incapable of adventure—except that of sex. Yet the thing itself is beautiful.

The mother feeds her child for several years; weaning is not generally practised until the mother is well advanced in pregnancy with the next child. The Pardhan mother appears to enjoy the task of nursing her baby and the child loves to fondle and play with the breasts, and one of the first words it learns to say is *Dudo*, breasts.

While a son is particularly loved by the mother during babyhood it is the daughter who naturally becomes the mother's companion and supporter when she grows a little older. The boy follows his father behind the plough and soon tries to be a little man with a small axe or a toy hoe. The girl on the other hand goes with a tiny pot to fetch water from the well and soon learns to help her mother cleaning the house, cooking simple dishes and stitching leaf-plates.

A daughter swears by her father and says, 'If I am my father's daughter, I will not do this or that.' But a son swears by his mother: 'If I am my mother's son.' Yet a boy also says proudly, 'I am my father's tiger cub.'

# THE FORCIBLE MARRIAGE

BY W. G. ARCHER

## I

THE custom of marrying a girl by forcibly smearing sindur or vermilion on her has been recorded of certain tribes in Chota Nagpur and the Santal Parganas. Sarat and Ramesh Chandra Roy, for example, give the following details of the custom among Dudh and Dhelki Kharias.

'A form of marriage is by forcible or rather unauthorized application of vermilion by a young man on the forehead of the girl of his choice. The girl is generally a consenting party. This form of taking a wife is ordinarily resorted to when the guardians of the boy or of the girl or of both, and even in rare instances the girl herself, are not agreeable to the union. The application of vermilion is regarded as tantamount to marriage, and if for any reason the boy cannot secure possession of the girl, the girl cannot take another husband except by a union in the *Bandai* or *Sagai* form prescribed for the remarriage of a widow. On such forcible application of vermilion, the boy is generally severely beaten. A Panch or council of village-elders is convened on a date notified beforehand, and the Panch generally authorize the father or guardian of the girl to bring from the boy's house five or six head of cattle by way of bride-price. The boy's people are also required to give a feast or rather two feasts (generally on two successive days) to the girl's people and to the Panches and others. The Dhelki Kharias call this form of union *Sandrom Lahki*, and the Dudh Kharias *Sandrom Tappa*.<sup>1</sup>

Among Birhors, a similar kind of marriage is known as *Sipundar Bapla*.<sup>2</sup> The custom has not, however, been recorded of the Baigas or the Maria Gonds and there is no reference to it in Dalton's *Descriptive Ethnology of Bengal*.

Among Santals, the custom is known as *iputut* and it is one of the fourteen recognized forms of Santal marriage. A boy takes some sindur or a substitute such as earth, dust or sand. He then chooses a spot where the girl of his choice is likely to come. He waits at the well, spring or pool where she goes for drawing water or the path she takes when coming back with firewood from the forest.

## I

Sister

In the dried up stream on the mountain

The *bar* tree leaves are big and broad

Gather the leaves, boy

Wrap the sindur in them

And mark the forehead

Of the girl from the west.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> S. C. and R. C. Roy, *The Kharias* (Ranchi, 1937), p. 270.

<sup>2</sup> S. C. Roy, *The Birhors* (Ranchi, 1925), pp. 146-7.

<sup>3</sup> Original as 1561 in G.G. Soren & W.G. Archer, *Hor Seren* (Dumka, 1943).

## 2

O you peacock in the peacock forest  
 I will make you fly  
 On your feathers I will put  
 Golden sindur.<sup>1</sup>

Or he seizes a chance at a festival, a wedding, a *chata parab* or a hook-swinging.

## 3

Little boys and big girls  
 How is it that they met?  
 On the way to the *pata*  
 The road was deep in dust  
 With the dust we marked their heads.

## 4

For forcing some sindur on me  
 You followed me  
 Beyond Pakaur  
 But you could not catch me, boy  
 With watering mouth  
 You slunk back home.<sup>2</sup>

## 5

Girls, run away  
 The boys  
 Are searching the walls  
 For scarlet powder.<sup>3</sup>

If he needs a witness he takes some friends with him but sometimes he tries to get the girl when no one else is there. He then dashes out on her, rubs the sindur on her forehead and runs away. In many cases it is done by connivance between the parties but in certain cases it is merely an act of outrage. Each *iputut*<sup>4</sup> arises from one of several situations and there is an appropriate remedy for each in Santal custom.

## II

The most normal situation is when a Santal boy and girl desire to marry but one or other of their parents is unwilling. Neither the boy nor the girl desires to elope, but at the same time, it may be difficult to bring the girl to the boy's house. The boy's mother may drive her out or her parents may drag her back. In these circumstances, it is necessary for the boy and girl to bring pressure on the parents and *iputut*<sup>5</sup> by consent is their way of doing so.

<sup>1</sup> *Lagre Seren*. Original published as 1515 in G. G. Soren and W. G. Archer, *Hor Seren* (Dumka, 1943).

<sup>2</sup> Originals as 1674 (*Lagre*) and 106 (*Sohrae*) in G. G. Soren and W. G. Archer, *op. cit.*

<sup>3</sup> *Don Seren*. Original as 2118, G. G. Soren and W. G. Archer, *Don Seren* (Dumka, 1944).

Tibu Tudu of Baski (Gopikandar) was due to marry a girl of Duaria. The doors were inspected, the clothes shown and the bride-price had been paid. Then Tibu's father suddenly died and the girl's party said, 'There is a *bonga* in his house. We will not marry her.' The matter dragged on. Tibu used to meet the girl when she went for *matkom halan* or gathering mahua. Both of them wanted to marry but the girl's parents kept refusing. Then the boys of Baski told Tibu to *itut* her. They made their plans and at the Gamra hook-swinging, the boys of Baski all surrounded the girl, shut her in a ring of arms and Tibu rubbed sindur on her head. Then they rushed away. After that the two villages met, there was no further delay, the claims were settled, and the *iputut* celebrated with a *dol bapla* or full-dress wedding.

In another case, Situl Marandi of Saharghati (Gando) wanted to marry a Soren girl but the boy's parents objected as the girl was older than the boy. Situl did not listen, so on the *jale* morning of Sohrae, the two went inside the *jogmanjhi*'s house and Situl put sindur on her. They told the *jogmanjhi*'s wife and Situl then took her home. At the meeting, Situl gave two goats and paid the *manjhi* five rupees and later there was a *dol bapla*, the bride-price and brother's bullock were paid and the girl was lifted in the basket.

In a third case, Muchia Murmu of Dhanbad (Jhilimili) was in love with a Tudu girl of the village but as he suffered from epilepsy the girl's parents were objecting. But the girl herself was willing. So when the next hook-swinging came round, they went with three other girls and all slept by each other at the festival ground. During the night Muchia put sindur on her. No one saw him do it but he was the only boy with them. In the morning, they said to him 'Rub some tobacco for us', and when they put the tobacco in his hand, they saw the sindur on his finger. At the village meeting, the claims were adjusted and the bride-price was settled. But because of his epilepsy, Muchia had to pay an extra sum of two rupees eight annas to the girl's father.

### III

A second circumstance is when a boy does *iputut* more or less on impulse.

Such a case occurred at Sibtala (Katikund) on 18 April 1944. There was a wedding in the village and a girl from Chandapura and a boy from Dhankutar had come to attend it. Both had relatives in Sibtala. Both knew each other and a marriage between them had already been settled. Suddenly the boy put sindur on her and dashed away.

In another case of Simuljor (Gando), the brother of Singrai Murmu was a *gharjawae* in Dhamna. Singrai was in love with his sister-in-law's younger sister, Gondo Hembrom, but the girl's



mother was objecting. Singrai went to Dhamna on the morning of the Baha festival. The girls were throwing water on the men but as Singrai was of another village they did not throw any at him. Then on the spur of the impulse Singrai picked up some mud and rubbed it on Gondo's head. Sibū and Mohon Hansdak' pounced on him and said, 'Why have you done it on her head? Why did you not do it on her body?' So they gave him a thrashing and took him to the *manjhi*. Next morning, they sent Singrai with a villager to the *manjhi* of Simuljor to report and fix a date for goats. On the day in question the villagers of Dhamna went to Simuljor with axes, arrows and drums and when the *manjhi* said 'Why have you come?' they replied 'A leopard of your village has scratched one of our calves.' Then they all sat round and Singrai was asked, 'Did you do it?' He answered, 'I picked up a little mud and put it on her head.' This was held to be *i putut* and two goats were killed. A bride-price of twelve rupees with *bare itat* was settled and Singrai was told to give the *manjhi* five rupees 'for saving his head' and pay a fine of five rupees as *jobrani*, for doing it by force. Then the villagers went back and Singrai gave a goat in Dhamna to 'clean the axe.' A date was settled for a *dol bapla* and a match-maker was appointed.

The matter did not, however, end there, for a little later Gondo's mother changed her mind. The wedding meant a second marriage with the same family and she believed that one or other would be sure to die. So she said, 'I will not give her.' She did not press for payment and the matter dropped. Some time later, Gondo was married in Jobalda as a *chadwi* and there was no *dol bapla* or *sindur*.

#### IV

A third situation is when more than one suitor is in the field.

In a case of 1944, talks had started for a girl in Paharpur (Karudih). The boy's parents had inspected her at a market and a proposal had been made through a match-maker. The offer had not been rejected but the clothes had not been seen. Meanwhile a boy from a well-to-do family of Dundua met her at a market, took her off with him several times and decided to marry her and the matter was broached through various friends. The girl and her parents thought the Dundua boy would be a better match but the difficulty was the talks that were going on for the first boy. As the girl's parents had not said 'no' at first, they did not like to say 'no' later. So they finally suggested that the Dundua boy should settle matters by putting *sindur* on the girl. The girl was quite agreeable. So one day when she was at the spring with other girls, the boy came, rubbed *sindur* on her and ran away. He was followed to his village, a bride-price of twenty-one rupees was taken and the boy took the girl to his home.

Finally there is the case when a boy is wildly in love with a girl but the girl and her parents are hesitating. In such circumstances, *iputut*' forces the issue. It is done not entirely against the girl's will nor entirely with her consent. It is a way of precipitating a decision.

## V

If consent is usual, however, it is by no means invariably given and *iputut*' is sometimes done when the girl is quite unwilling. On such occasions, the boy often does it in the hope that it will force the girl to live with him. Rather than become a *chadwi*, she will change her mind and go with him.

Budhrai Murmu of Kurumpahar (Gando) wanted to marry Bale Marandi, a girl of his village. The girl who was much taller and bigger, however, did not want him and preferred to wait for marriage in another village. Budhrai did not change his mind, and one December morning he went with three friends and surprised Bale in a paddy field. His friends held her down and Budhrai put sindur on her head. Bale was very angry and refused point-blank to go with him. The village met and Budhrai's father gave three goats. Budhrai tried to persuade her but Bale was completely adamant. Budhrai failed and in the end Bale stayed with her parents.

## VI

Marriage, however, is not the sole object of *iputut*' and although cases are rare, the act is sometimes an outrage and is done for revenge.

A family finds itself jilted. It has started marriage talks but the talks are suddenly stopped. The girl's family give out that the boy's parents are witches, quarrelsome or diseased. This incenses the boy's family and they decide to revenge themselves by doing *iputut*' and making the girl a *chadwi*.

Or, again, a boy is in love with a girl but the girl is spurning him or going with another.

Paklu Kisku of Fulapani (Dumka subdivision) had gone with her husband and son to her father's house for the marriage of her brother. When the wedding was over her husband went back and she and her son stayed on. Four days later there was another wedding in the village. Paklu went to it and as she was coming back, Chotka Hembrom took out some sindur and rubbed it on her forehead. Rasika Soren caught him but Chotka got away. Then they went and told the *manjhi*. The *manjhi* tried to hold some meetings but Chotka did not attend. In the end, Paklu went to court. Chotka was fined and Paklu got forty rupees as compensation. In this case Chotka was an unsuccessful lover and had done the *iputut*' in order to spite her. Paklu had at first agreed to go with him and leave her husband but later she had taken another lover and ignored him. Paklu's husband did not divorce her and the two are still together.

## VII

A last case arises from the Santal view of the after-life. Santals believe that after death, in *hanapuri*, a girl will go to her first husband. A Santal who is married to a *chadwi* will therefore have no wife when he dies. To secure a wife for *hanapuri* he must put sindur on a *dangua* and *iputut* is sometimes done for this purpose.

Sibu Hansdak', the old guru of Dhamna, was once partly responsible for such a case. Sadho Hansdak' who was a *chadwi* of Kurua had become pregnant by Mandal Marandi of Dhamna. She wanted him to marry her but Mandal said he would first marry a *dangua* so as to have a wife in *hanapuri*. Sadho did not want a co-wife, so she consulted Sibu. Sibu suggested that Mandal should secretly *itut* Sadho's *dangua* sister. Mandal and the girl agreed, so one day Mandal, Sadho and her sister went to the forest and Mandal secretly put sindur on her. A little later Mandal married Sadho and Sadho's sister was later married in another village.

## VIII

Once the *iputut*, in one or other of these forms, is over, the girl tells her father and certain consequences follow.

According to *Mare Hapram Ko Reak' Katha* (1871), the father assembles his sons and the villagers and they set off for the boy's village with axes and arrows. They go to the *manjhi*, who says, 'What is our work?' Then they go to the boy's house, smash up all the water pots and break the fireplaces. They catch and tie the boy and beat him till he almost dies. Then they leave him lying in his courtyard and go out in search of goats. If they get two goats they kill them with axes, and if pigs, they shoot them with arrows. Then they seize some cattle and when they have got three bullocks or buffaloes they take them with the goats to the *manjhi*.

The two villages then sit together. The girl is brought out. She is asked if the *iputut* was done freely or against her will. Both parties then eat the three animals and the *manjhi* makes over the three buffaloes or bullocks as security for the boy's father paying. The girl's father is then awarded sixteen rupees irrespective of whether the girl goes to the boy or not<sup>1</sup> and the *manjhi* is given five rupees 'for saving the boy's head.' This is a survival of a former practice by which a boy who did *iputut* was hunted down and killed. As the *manjhi* intervenes and saves him, he keeps three rupees and gives two to the villagers. A little later, they marry her like a *dangua*. If she does not go to the boy, she becomes a *chadwi*.

<sup>1</sup> Bodding adds that this is in addition to the bride-price and that the sum is nowadays 5 or 7 rupees. *A Santal Dictionary* (Oslo, 1932-6), Vol. III, p. 213. The sixteen rupees is obviously a form of *jobrani*.

A Sohrae song refers to the ancient practice.

From the house I came  
And stood in the road  
A Murmu boy  
Was darting like a fish  
They were hacking him with axes  
Oh do not strike him, do not kill him  
He is my lover, I love him.<sup>1</sup>

A somewhat different account is given by Campbell. According to this writer, 'the girl on realizing what has been done to her hurries home weeping, and tells her mother the name of the man who has thus forcibly wedded her. Her father calls the villagers together and tells them the story of the injury done to his daughter, saying 'Come let us be revenged.' A large party having been organized, they set out so as to arrive at the man's village some time during the night and lie in ambush till the village cattle are turned out in the early morning to graze. They then seize a yoke of good oxen and kill two big fat goats. One goat they give to the *manjhi* of the raided village and the other they carry home with them.

Then they go to the house of the man's father and demand that he be delivered over to them. They are frenzied and excited and threaten if they find him to cut off one of his hands, to gouge out his eyes, to bind him hand and foot and cudgel him. He is, however, not to be found, as he no doubt fully expected such a visit, and has kept out of the way. Not finding the object of their search they give vent to their rage by an onslaught on the household utensils of his father. They enter the house, break the fireplace to pieces, and smash the water pots, cooking pots and all other earthenware articles that the house contains. Then they go home taking with them the two oxen and the carcase of the goat.

Should the matter be amicably arranged between the parents of the couple a regular marriage is the result, and the presents usual to the occasion are not overlooked.

Should no such arrangement be possible the girl remains with her father and should she be married it cannot be as a spinster, it must be as a divorced woman.<sup>1</sup>

This war-like descent on the boy's village is no longer current in the Santal Parganas but I have recorded an account of what was customary in the Dumka Damini until the 1930's. The girl would first report to her father, who would call a village meeting and then, armed with sticks, axes and arrows the party would

<sup>1</sup> *Sohrae Seren*. Original published as 206, G. G. Soren and W. G. Archer *Hor Seren* (Dumka 1944).

<sup>2</sup> A. Campbell, 'Santal Marriage Customs,' *J. B. O. R. S.*, Vol. II (1916), pp. 329-330.

attack the boy's village, seize three or five goats and cut their heads off or shoot down three or five pigs. They would then go to the *manjhi* and the following talk would proceed. 'See, *Manjhi*, we have come.' 'Yes, you have come. I am full of fear.' 'Yesterday one of your boys put sindur on a girl and spoilt her.' 'I will ask the villagers.' A joint sitting would then take place and the girl's *manjhi* would explain that they had not come at their own instance but that the girl had brought them. The girl would then say, 'He put sindur on me,' and the talk would go on. 'He has done very well. What is the harm? You may come and live with him.' 'Why should I live with him? Why should I have his sindur? I do not want him. I will not go to him.' Then the boy would be asked, 'Why did you do it?' 'Because I wanted her'. After that a decision would be taken. If the girl at last agreed, the bride-price and the brother's bullock with *jobrani* of five rupees would be paid to her father and the girl would go with the boy. If she said 'no' the bride-price and *jobrani* would be paid and the girl stayed with her father. The cost of the goats and pigs was paid by the boy's father and the parties then went home.

## IX

At the present time, there is no violence and the matter is discussed, first in the girl's village and then in the boy's. If the incident is proved, the settlement is as follows:

Assuming that the boy and the girl want to live together, the boy pays the girl's father the usual bride-price (*pon*) and the brother's bullock (*bare itat*). Since, however, the act was against tribal discipline he must pay his own village *manjhi* five rupees as *bohok' bancao*, 'for saving his head' and he must also pay the villagers a penalty fine or give some *khasis* for a feast.<sup>1</sup>

If he is a *dangua* and the girl has also never been married this penalty is two *khasis* (castrated goats or pigs), one for his own village and one for the girl's. If he is a widower or *chadwa* and the girl is *dangua*, the penalty is three *khasis*, one for the girl's village and two for the boy's. In place of the *khasis*, five or ten rupees is sometimes charged and the exact amount is decided by the villagers.

There is a similar penalty if the girl is a *chadwi*, a married girl or a widow. Two *khasis* must be bought by the boy and shared by the two villages or in the alternative each village must be paid some cash. This ranges from two rupees eight annas to five rupees per village according as the meeting decides.

If the village thinks proper, he may also have to pay a further sum of five to sixteen rupees to the girl's father as *jobrani* 'for doing it by force.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In the Handwai and Gando taluks the *khasis* are taken to include *bohok' bancao*.

<sup>2</sup> In the Dhamna case, for example, five rupees was paid.

When the boy or girl do not want to live together the following considerations influence the settlement.

The boy may have done the *iputut*' with the girl's consent but change his mind between the act and the village meetings. He may suddenly discover that the girl is already pregnant and in that case the *iputut*' will seem only a disastrous mistake. The boy will blame the girl for making him do it but the girl may insist on going to his house.

Juri, before the village and the country  
 You forced the sindur on me  
 If now you do not keep me  
 I will bring a case in Godda court  
 I will sell you up  
 Down to your little loin cloth.<sup>1</sup>

More usually, however, it is the girl's refusal that prevents consummation.

In either case since the boy has acted by force, he must pay a sum large enough to act as a deterrent to others. He must pay his own *manjhi* five rupees for 'saving his head' and also pay the villagers money or give them *khasis* at the same rates as if the girl had gone to him. In addition, he must pay a sum which is never less than five rupees and which is sometimes thirty rupees or even more according to local custom and as the villagers decide.

In some cases this extra sum coincides with the local rate of *pon* and also includes *bare itat*'.

Pandu Hembrom of Bhangahir (Masanjor) did *iputut*' to Ludgi Murmu of the same village. Ludgi refused to live with him and Pandu had to pay *pon* to the girl's father, *bare itat*' to her brothers, five rupees to the *manjhi* and three *khasis* and five rupees to the villagers. When it was paid nothing was left in his house and he went to Bengal and has never returned.

In other cases, it may be a sum only equivalent to the *pon*.

In the Gando area twelve rupees—the standard amount for *pon*—is all that is paid to the girl's father.

In Paharpur (Benagoria), Kalu Hansdak', a *chadwa*, paid twenty rupees—the *pon* for a *chadwa* marrying a *dangua*—to the father of a girl whom he *ituted* in Sibrat (P.S. Pakuria).<sup>2</sup>

In certain areas, on the other hand, the extra sum is not regarded as a bride-price. 'The *iputut*' married them but as the girl is not going to the boy, she is like any other married girl who does not go to her husband. In such a case her bride-price must be given back and the *bare itat*' withheld. Similarly, if after

<sup>1</sup> *Don Seren*. Original published as 1964 G. G. Soren and W. G. Archer, *Don Seren* (Dumka, 1944).

<sup>2</sup> No *bohok*' *bancao*, however, was paid but three *khasis* were given.

*iputut'* a girl does not give the boy her body, 'how can her father get its price? The boy has made her a *chadwi*, so the father must get damages but nothing more.'

In this view the sum is a compensation for forcibly lowering her status. It is termed *jobrani* and is a summary substitute for both the loss of the *bare itat'* and the difference between the bride-price of a *dangua* and a *chadwi*.

In Jarmundi and Ranga Maslia police stations, the accepted usage is seven rupees eight annas as *jobrani* to the girl's father in addition to five rupees as *bohok' banco* to the *manjhi* and *khasis* or cash to the villagers.

On the other hand in a case from Partapur (Shikaripara) fifteen rupees was levied as *jobrani*. A boy did *iputut'* to a girl of the same village. Two *khasis* were given. The boy gave the *manjhi* five rupees as *bohok' banco* and out of fifteen rupees as *jobrani* the girl's father took seven rupees eight annas, while the village gave two rupees to the girl's brother in lieu of *bare itat'* and drank the rest.

*Jobrani* does not however exhaust the claims and in certain areas there is yet another payment which swells the fine. This is known both as *sindur urani*—a fine for wiping off the sindur—and *bohok' chikan*, a fine for 'cleaning the head.' 'He has put it by force. He must pay to wipe it clean.'

Thus in the Lakhanpur, Choto and Banskuli circles (Dumka) ten rupees is thought appropriate as *jobrani* but an extra five rupees is taken as *sindur urani* and paid to the girl's father. This fifteen rupees is in addition to the *manjhi's* fee and the cash or *khasis* for the villagers.

Finally, the extra sum is occasionally a combination both of bride-price and *jobrani*.

In Dharampur (Lakhanpur) a *chadwa* did *iputut'* to a *dangua*. The *manjhi* was paid his five rupees but the girl's father got not only sixteen rupees—the local rate of *pon*—but ten rupees as *jobrani*. The boy and girl were of the same village. No *khasis* were taken.

Similarly in Masanjore circle, *jobrani* of five rupees as well as a bride-price must be paid to the girl's father and in addition *bare itat'* to her brothers. 'She is now a *chadwi*. If her brother does not have his bullock now, he will never have it.'

The total extra sum realized from the boy is thus a mixture of varying elements. The demand is based not on one incident but on a fusion of various claims. It is sometimes a bride-price, sometimes a fine for force, sometimes it includes the brother's bullock, sometimes there is a charge for wiping off the sindur. When it is not one claim, it is another. Yet its intention is invariably the same. It is a compounding of the outrage in a way which will both punish the boy and compensate the father of the girl.

## X

If the girl is a married woman, there are two alternatives. Her husband may decide to keep her and if she has not gone away with the man or had relations with him, he can claim a sum for *sindur urani*, wiping off the sindur. This is in addition to the five rupees which the man must pay the *manjhi* as *bohok' banco* and the money or *khasis* he must give the villagers as if the girl had stayed with him. *Sindur urani* is normally between five and fifteen rupees according to local custom and as the villagers decide. If, however, the girl has actually been with the man and her husband takes her back, he can claim not only *sindur urani* but an extra sum as *celan gitil*, for 'cleaning the pot.' This latter sum also varies from five to fifteen rupees according to village discretion and the custom of the area.

Her husband, however, may not wish to keep her and in that event he can also claim from the boy a double bride-price and may, occasionally, be awarded the expenses of his wedding.

Jetha Hembrom, a married boy of Kholia (Dumkani) fell in love with a married girl of the same village. He put sindur on her at the hook-swinging in Chakolta. Jetha kept the girl and paid her husband sixty rupees.

In certain cases, however, the boy who does the *iputut'* also does not want to keep her. This does not make any difference for 'the act has made the girl his wife.' He must pay her husband a double bride-price and in certain circumstances the cost of the wedding. He must also give the girl *chadaodi* or divorce money.

In all these cases, the payments are in addition to the five rupees which the man must pay the *manjhi* as *bohok' banco* and the money or *khasis* he must give the villagers.

There is one other claim. According to Santal custom, no boy or girl can be married unless their *caco chatiar* ceremony has been done. This usually occurs when the child is seven or eight years old but it is sometimes put off until later. If a boy *ituts* a girl and her *caco chatiar* has not been done, it is as if he has married her without her first becoming a full Santal. *Iputut'* makes a *caco chatiar* ceremony immediately necessary and the boy has therefore to give rice beer and the five four-anna bits necessary for the meeting.

## XI

These are the consequences for the boy, but for the girl the most important effect follows from the sindur itself and this I will now briefly describe.

In Santal society, sindur or vermilion has a special relevance to the *bongas* or spirits and is in fact a kind of mystical link or way of access to them. The *naeke* puts sindur on the stones in the sacred grove because as village priest he is the channel by



which the *bongas* are approached. A Santal uses sindur when he sacrifices to his house *bongas* because he has also the same intimate relation. Sindur is put on sacrificial animals and fowls in order to attach them to the *bongas*.

The use of sindur in a marriage is for a similar purpose. So long as a girl is unmarried, she is in 'touch with' her father's *bongas*. She can clean the private shrine (*bhitar*) and assist at the house sacrifices. Her status as an unmarried daughter gives her this relation. If she then marries but in a manner without sindur,<sup>1</sup> she remains attached to her father's *bongas*. She can assist at her father's ceremonies but cannot help her husband at his house. 'Her base may be cracked but her head is still intact.' If, however, she marries in a form with sindur the sindur cancels this relation. She is no longer competent to assist her father. She is instead brought into touch with the *bongas* of her husband. She can clean his private shrine (*bhitar*) and cow-dung a place for his offerings. She can fast and make the flour for the offerings. She can cook the *pitar* offered in the cowshed at Sohrae. She can cook all the sacrificial meat except the head and can share in eating any meat offered to all the *bhitar bongas* except the *abge*. The only exception is that she cannot eat the head. She acquires in fact a new religious relation.

Against this background, the effects of *iputut*' will now be clear. If the girl is a *dangua* and goes to live with the boy, *iputut*' is, as it were, a telescoped version of a full-dress wedding (*dol bapla*). It qualifies her to assist in the service of the *bongas* in the same way as a *dol bapla* with sindur would have qualified her. It gives her the complete status of a fully married wife though it may also be only a preliminary to a fuller celebration. When Singo Marandi of Dhamna (Gando) was *ituted* by Jongal Baskey of Dudhani on the Sakrat morning of Sohrae, she said 'I will go with him but they must lift me in the basket.' So a *dol bapla* with sindur took place later.

If a girl is married by *iputut*', lives with her husband and is later on divorced it will be by a tearing of the leaves and if she marries again, it will be as a *chadwi*. Because she was a *dangua* when the first *iputut*' was done, she will also be her husband's wife in *hanapuri*.

But a *dangua* girl does not always go to the boy and in that case her *iputut*' has the effect of a marriage and divorce. The sindur puts her into contact with the boy's *bongas* but her denial cancels this relation. She becomes a divorcee, a *bohok' chadwi*—'her head is divorced but her tail is intact'—and only if she belongs to certain septs and kunts can she secure a fresh *bonga* relation.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, even if she remarries, her husband will be only 'for this life' and in *hanapuri* she will go to the boy who put the sindur on her.

<sup>1</sup> i.e., in or *ader*, *nir bolok'*, *apangir*, *kundal napam*.

<sup>2</sup> *Chilbinda Hansdak'*, and possibly one or two others.

But the girl may not be a *dangua* and may already be a *chadwi*. In that event, the *iputut* will affect her according as she has had or not had sindur earlier. If she has been married without sindur and then divorced she is still the equivalent of a *dangua* and the sindur gives her all the qualifications. She will not belong to her 'first husband.' She will go in *hanapuri* to the boy who did the *iputut*.

If, however, the *iputut* is not a first but a second sindur, the result will depend on her sept and kunt, and in almost all cases the position will be as follows. Her first sindur will have given her a special relation to certain *bongas*—those of her first husband. The tearing of the leaves will have cancelled this but having once acquired this relation by sindur, she cannot acquire a new one. Her 'contact' with one set of house *bongas* disqualifies her from 'contact' with any others. If therefore she goes and lives with the boy who *ituts* her the second sindur scarcely differs from the sindur given at a *baha saonha*. This is a kind of fake or symbolic sindur. It enables her children to be married with sindur at a *dol bapla* but it does not qualify her otherwise. Only in the case of the Chilbinda kunt of Hansdak's and possibly one or two others is the second sindur like a first sindur and carries with it all the privileges.

There is a similar complication in the case of a married woman. If she has already had sindur from her husband, she is already in relation with his *bongas* and the second sindur abruptly breaks this connection. A married woman who stays on with her husband is reduced to the position of a *chadwi*. She can no longer assist him in the ceremonies or clean the *bhitar*. Since she has had sindur she is like a *chadwi* with whom a husband has done *baha saonha*. Her children can have a *dol bapla* with sindur but that is all.

Similarly, if a married woman has *iputut* and goes to the man the position is the same. She is like a *chadwi* who has been given sindur in *baha saonha*.

## XII

What then is the final Santal view of *iputut*?

To a boy, this wild act is a form of excitement, a source of danger, a style of romance. He may get a beating but he has either made a girl his own or ruined her. He has either defied his parents, had his revenge or won a girl for ever. The cost may ruin him for a few years but the penalties are only money.

To a *chadwi* or a widow also, the results are slight. Both are anxious for marriage. Each can no longer expect a fresh *bonga* relation. *Iputut* is neither necessary nor damaging and it is usually only by accident or in the excitement of a wedding that *iputut* is done to a *chadwi* or a widow.

Thinking it was fresh  
I took a cooked bel fruit  
Thinking she was not yet married  
I rubbed some sindur on a *chadwi*.<sup>1</sup>

It is to a married or unmarried girl that *iputut* is disastrous. In the one case it deprives her of her right to assist in the offerings to her husband's *bongas*. In the other it attaches her to his *bongas* and links her to a man in *hanapuri*. The damage is not 'for a day' but for ever. To a married or unmarried girl, it is a moment's disaster which 'an age of prudence can never retract.'

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<sup>1</sup> *Don Seren*. Original as 1859, G. G. Soren and W. G. Archer, *Don Seren* (Dumka, 1944).

# MARRIAGE AMONG THE DRAVIDIANS

BY L. A. KRISHNA IYER

THE bulk of the population of Travancore are the Dravidians who are not governed by the Sastric Hindu law of marriage. The Dravidians do not believe that a woman who dies unmarried and a man who is without a son are destined to go to hell. With them marriage is not a religious duty, the violation of which is blasphemy. Only the Brahmans look upon marriage as a religious duty.

Marriage falls under two heads, Dharma-vivaha and Kama-vivaham. Under the former fall Brahman, Daivam, Arsham, and Praja-patyam. The first class of alliance or canonical marriage is a form of social marriage, the primary object of which is to enable a man to perform certain appointed duties to society and to provide for the discharge of those duties in the family even after death. The husband and wife have to exercise different functions. The former in addition to his social duties is the guardian of the wife's interests, both temporal and secular, and the latter holds herself responsible for all the domestic functions. The bond of interdependence connects the two in permanent union and protects it from danger against possible effects of time on the body and mind of either partner. In the case of Kama-vivaham, the object is individual and each seeks to get the best partner in his or her personal state or happiness. The children are the by-products of a conveniency alliance.

## EXOGENY

The selection of persons for marriage is guided by two rules: first, that they must be outside the family, and secondly, they must be within the caste.

The Nayers are split into numerous castes with very minute social distinctions separating them. Each of these consists of a number of families which may be collectively called a clan. The families constituting a clan are related to one another by community of pollution. Intermarriages between members of the same clan are socially prohibited. Among the clans are some which maintain equality of social standing with one another. There are others which are socially superior or inferior. The only socially valid marriages are those in which the parties are of equal social standing or in which the bridegroom belongs to a clan superior to that to which the bride belongs. In all other cases, the union entails social stigma and a blot upon the fame and dignity of the bride's family.<sup>1</sup>

The most outstanding feature of the Nayar tarwad is that the system of kinship which obtains is one in which fathers are practically ignored in the law and descent is reckoned through mothers. The civil law of the land took cognisance only of rela-

<sup>1</sup> T. K. Golala Panikkar, *Malabar and its Folk*, pp. 17-18.

tions in the female line. The constitution of a tarwad or family of people living together is exceedingly complex. A mother and all her children, both male and female, all her grandchildren by her daughters, all her brothers and sisters, and the descendants on the sister's side, in short all the woman's relations on the female side, however distant their relationship, live together in the same block of buildings, have a common table, enjoy all her property, and share it after her death in common with one another. There are instances in the country of such tarwads with about 200 members belonging to different branches and separated from one another by generations of descent, yet all able to trace their descent from a common ancestress. When by constant additions of members of a tarwad, it becomes too unwieldy to be governed and managed by one man, natural forces begin to work and bring about a division of it into various distinct tarwads which keeps up the original traditions of common descent, but have no legal right to the property of one another. These partitions are so arranged as to bring into separate tarwads closely related members who before belonged to one branch of the original constitution, and the kindred sympathies are thus placed on a better and a stronger basis of relationship. Over the whole of this group of members living in one tarwad, the eldest male is by legal right appointed Karanavar or managing head.

Among the Nayars, no woman ever left her house to take up her residence with her husband. The clan or tarwad consisted of all the descendants in the female line of a common *male ancestor*. The household was constituted by the mother and her children, sisters and brothers; no husband formed part of it. The husbands were in the strictest sense visitors only, and so scrupulously was that position recognized that a Nayar husband would not partake of food in the house of his wife, not being a member of it, but made a point of paying his visits after supper.<sup>1</sup> At the present day, much of the social organization of Nayar motherhoods has suffered the disintegrating influence of modern conditions; but the essential rule of matrimonial marriage continues to be adhered to, and aristocratic families refuse to send their ladies out of the home. The philosophical Arab traveller Al-Biruni states in fact that, according to the original Indian custom, the child belongs to the caste of the mother, and not to that of the father, but that in his day the usage of marrying in the same caste was becoming substitution for the older practice.<sup>2</sup> The maternal uncle plays an important part not only as the Karanavan, the representative of the former ruling mother, but in many other ways. The Ammachanpattu, the maternal uncle's song is sung at marriage. Children belong to a certain degree to their mother's brother,

<sup>1</sup> F. Buchanan, *A Journey from Madras*, Vol. II., p. 412.

<sup>2</sup> R. Briffault, *The Mothers* (London, 1927), Vol. II, p. 412.

whose name occurs in theirs. The eldest daughter of the eldest mother in the house is of great importance in the house, and formerly ruled as Prime Minister of the house. Her brothers too obeyed her orders as the bond between brother and sister was particularly strong throughout their whole life. Thus the family was dearer to a Nayar than anything else in the world.

In Malabar the Nayars are grouped into clans localized in South and North Malabar. The clans of North Malabar are the superior and the highest clan of South Malabar is supposed to correspond to North Malabar clans. The Nayars of North Malabar are supposed to be superior all along the line, clan for clan, to those of South Malabar. Some clans are divided into groups, the Vattakad clan of South Malabar is composed of Veluthathu or white division, which is superior, and the Karuthathu or black division. The dual organization of the Nayars was of a thorough-going nature.<sup>1</sup>

The main subdivisions of the Nayars are as follow :—

1. The Kiriyaathil Nayars who represents the highest class and are more found in Cochin and Travancore.
2. Illakar who form a large number. They are the highest of Travancore Nayars.
3. Swarupam Nayars who are next in rank to Illakars.
4. Padamangalam and Tamil Padam who were not originally Nayars but immigrants from Tamil country.

Besides the above, the Idachery, Maran, Chembukotti, Odathu, Chakkala, Pallichan, and Chetty, Chaliyan, Veluthedan, and Vilakkathalavan are other subdivisions which are inferior to genuine Nayars in the social scale.

#### IZHAVA

The Izhavas are divided into three subdivisions, Pachili, Pandi, and Malayala. The Pachilis live in the tract of land called Pachalar in the Neyyathumkara taluq between Tiruvallam and Kovalam. The Pandis are found largely in Trivandrum and Chirayinkal. Most of them take the title of Panikkan. The Malayala Izhavas are divided into four exogamous clans, Muttillom, Madambi or Pallichal, Mayanathi, and Chozhi. The members of Chozhi illom are believed to have been later settlers. There is another division called Pathikraman based on a more or less geographical distinction. These are four in number and are called Pallikatra, Palattara, Irukulamgara in Trivandrum and Tenganad in Trivandrum. The Palattara is the most orthodox, and rigorously preserves its endogamous character, though some of the titular dignitaries among the Chovas of Central Travancore have found it possible to contract alliances with them. The divisions of the illoms and Pathikraman are absent among

<sup>1</sup> W. D. Perry, *The Children of the Sun* (London, 1926), p. 276.

the Chovas. Among them there is a division into Stani or Melkudi, Tanikudi, and Kizhukudi, the first denoting the titular head, the second, the ordinary class, and the third, those under communal degradation. Among the last are included the toddy-drawing families, Vaduvans and Nadis. The Vaduvans were slaves of the Izhavas, and in ancient times could be easily bought and sold by them. Nadis are found in Karthigapalli and some other parts of Travancore. They are people who have been outcasted from the community for various offences by the headman, and cannot enter the kitchen of the ordinary Izhavas. They are served for ceremonial purposes not by the regular priests of the Izhavas, but by a distinct sect like themselves called Nadikuruppus. The Izhavathis who are the priests of the caste form a distinct sect. The Malayala Izhavas are characterized by four exogamous clans, Yogi illom, Muthuvaka illom, Kalluvalli illom, and Madambi illom. The clans are exogamous. A woman retains her clan after marriage and children follow her clan. Cross-cousin marriage is prevalent among them. A similar fusion appears to have taken place among them as among the Nayars, but the progress is at a more accelerated pace.

#### THE FISHING CASTES

The Mukkuvan in North Malabar is divided into four illoms, Ponnillom, Chembillom, Karillom, and Kachillom. They are hence called Nalillakkars. In South Malabar there are only three illokkars. There is a section of the caste called Kavuthiyans who act as barbers to others and are called Panimagans. The Nalillakars are regarded as superior to Munnillakar and Kavuthiyans. The latter have special functions to perform in connection with the removal of ceremonial pollution.

The Paravans of Changanaseri have the following exogamous clans: the Changailom, the Veluthiri illom, Velillom, and Kadanna illom. A woman retains her clan after her marriage and children belong to the clan of the mother. They do not marry cross-cousins.

The Valans have four exogamous clans: the Alayaku, Ennelu, Vysiagirian, and Vazhapalli, which correspond to the gotras of the Brahman, the members of which are descendants from a common ancestor. According to a tradition, they were once attached to the four Nambutiri illoms above mentioned for service of some kind, and were even the descendants of the members of the illoms, but were doomed to the present state of degradation on account of some misconduct. There is an attempt to bring under a common name, Arayan, all those who follow the occupation of fishing.

#### HYPERGAMY

Among the high caste Dravidians, the Nayars, marriage is hypergamous, while among the lower castes, it is endogamous.

A Nayar is allowed to form matrimonial alliance with a woman of his own subdivision or one lower in the social scale than himself, but his womankind are prohibited from exercising the same liberty. This is called anuloma and pratiloma. According to usage, a Nayar woman consorting with a man of the higher caste follows the hair, purifies the blood, and raises the progeny in social estimation. By cohabiting with a man of a lower caste, clan or subdivision, she would be guilty of pratiloma, and if the difference of caste is so great, she would be turned out of the family to prevent the whole family from being boycotted. In many cases, the Nambutiris, Embrans, Pottis, and Tamil Brahmans, Kshatriyas, and Ampalavasis form alliance with Nayar women, but the latter and their children cannot touch their husbands and fathers without polluting them. Children of this union belong to the mother's clan. In the clan system descent was reckoned in the female line, uterine ties alone constituting kinship. The father was not regarded as even related to his children, bear the clan name, and the clan name becomes the test of blood relationship. Among the Nayars, Ambalavasis, and the Malayali Kshatriyas, the same customs are in force, and kinship is reckoned through the female. 'The womb dyes the child.' Marriage is endogamous among low caste Sudras. Among them it is strictly prohibited even in the case of persons belonging to the same family or whose relationship cannot be traced to its origin. A man cannot marry the sister of his deceased wife nor from her family. The above marriage customs are applicable to the Izhavas. The best form of marriage among them is where a man marries the daughter of his maternal uncle over whom he has a preferential claim. Marriage of cousins is widely prevalent among the Dravidians of South India. Speaking broadly, marriage among the fishing castes, the Kamalans, Panans, Velan and Kaniyans is endogamous as regards caste, but exogamous as regards illom.

#### DOWRY MARRIAGE

In Travancore dowry marriage is the universal custom among the Brahmans. It is prevalent among the Christians and is becoming more popular among the Nayars, Izhavas, and Nanjanad Vellalas, especially after the recent enactment of legislation affecting their marriage and inheritance. Among them girls belonging to well-to-do families are now sought after by educated young men in view of their share of the family properties. The practice of parents procuring husbands for their daughters either by payment in cash or by meeting the expenses of their higher education in India or foreign Universities is also coming into vogue among the Nayars and other marumakkathayam communities.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> N. Kunjan Pillai, *Travancore Census Report, 1931*.



## FORMS OF MARRIAGE

There are two forms of marriage among marumakkathayam communities in Travancore, the thalikettukalyanam and sambandham. It is the duty of a Nayar mother to arrange a ceremonial marriage for each daughter before puberty. The ceremony is brief, simple, and inexpensive, the essential part being the tying of the bridal necklace round the neck of the girl. The ceremonial bridegroom may be a complete stranger. He acquires no marital rites, goes away immediately, and probably never sees the girl again. Later on, the girl manages her own matrimonial affairs at her own discretion. The matrimonial tie is called sambandham which may be a lifelong monogamous marriage, or a very temporary alliance. Thalikettukalyanam is performed before a Nayar girl attained puberty, while sambandham is celebrated before she attains maturity, and the omission or neglect of it would place her and her family under a ban; for it is considered a religious impurity for a girl to attain puberty before the performance of this ceremony. There is a tendency for these restrictions being overlooked nowadays. The main features of the ceremony are:—

1. Performance of the ceremony for all the girls down to the cradle for the sake of economy.
2. The fixing of an auspicious day and hour by the astrologer for the ceremony.
3. Information to friends and relations in the village and also to local chieftains or to their landlord.
4. Procession to the marriage pandal to place the auspicious things which is the formal beginning.
5. Worship of the sun the next morning.
6. A feast during previous night.
7. Tali-tying for each girl by a separate member of the caste, by a Thirumalpad for a number of girls or by the mother before the deity.
8. Certain formalities indicative of wife's duties.
9. Feast during the next three days.
10. Their bath on the 4th day.
11. Their eating together from the same dish.
12. Their formal separation.

There is no officiating priest in attendance, no formula to be repeated. Under the stress of modern civilization and as a result of work by social reformers, the Nayars and Izhavas have now practically given up Thalikettukalyanam or combined it with sambandham. Other small matriarchal communities are also showing a similar tendency to effect a similar reform so that before

very long the institution of thalikettukalyanam may become extinct. Moore thinks that the thalikettukalyanam has a curious resemblance to the mock marriage to a god which is often performed when girls are dedicated to temple service and religious prostitution. The comparison of thalikettukalyanam to the dedication of girls to temple service is unfortunate. Girls dedicated to temple service are known to be professional prostitutes but girls of marumakkathayam communities are not. There is as much fidelity among them as there is among the most orthodox makkathayam communities. The misconception seems to have arisen out of the freedom which marumakkathayam men and women enjoy to dissolve marriage when they find that persons of incompatible temperaments have been united, a freedom now longed for by many women in advanced countries like the United States of America and which lent itself to the interpretation that thalikettukalyanam is mock marriage and that sambandham is only an alliance for concubinage. Thalikettukalyanam has no doubt degenerated into a mock marriage, but it is not a licence for prostitution, and sambandham is true wedlock, and not a hall-mark of concubinage.<sup>1</sup>

There are certain customs which go to show that it was once real marriage and that circumstances compelled certain communities to resort to sambandham and retain the other as a relic of an earlier form. Among the Nayars, it is imperative that the boys who officiate as bridegrooms at thalikettukalyanam should belong to the same sub-caste as the girls. In recent times, boys of higher castes, such as Thirumalpad and Brahman, have also been permitted to perform the function in North Travancore. But in South Travancore, it has always been the practice that boys and girls taking part in the thalikettu ceremony should be of the same sub-caste. Strict endogamy was thus insisted in the form of marriage. The Nayars were formerly a military class. The loss of male population caused by the warfare they were engaged in constantly depleted their numbers, and consequently it must have become impossible for girls to get suitable husbands if the selection had been confined to a limited circle of their own sub-caste. The necessity therefore arose for looking for suitors from among other sub-castes also. The community evidently sanctioned the custom, but insisted that though the men and women thus united may remain as husband and wife, they should not break the taboo on interdining, which was a corollary of strict endogamy. Restriction on endogamy was relaxed, but restriction on interdining continued to be strictly enforced. As a result of this change, one finds the curious circumstance, especially in North Travancore, of a man of a lower sub-caste and a woman of a higher sub-caste entering into marital relationship by sambandham, but

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, p. 162.

observing a strict taboo on interdining. That thalikettukalyanam was a real form of marriage is further corroborated by the fact that even in recent times; especially in South Travancore, when the man who officiated as bridegroom to a girl in South Travancore died, the latter was considered to be under pollution for three days. Such a custom would not have come into existence, if kettukalyanam did not confer true relationship of husband and wife on the man and woman. Circumstantial evidence and existing customs point to kettukalyanam having been the real marriage at one time, but when sambandham had to be resorted to for widening the field of selection of husbands, it degenerated into a mock marriage and became a relic of an ancient custom.<sup>1</sup>

The prevalence of marumakkathayam which recognizes the supremacy of the woman has made the women of those communities who follow this system of inheritance and who constitute the large majority of the population of the State more self-reliant and self-dependent than the women of the makkathayam communities. The rapid progress made in female education in the State during the last two or three decades has also strengthened the spirit of self-reliance and self-dependence in women. All these causes contribute to the unique position that Travancore occupies in India in regard to the marital condition of women.<sup>2</sup> At the same time a comparison of the unmarried people in India and Travancore with those of western countries will reveal the position of Travancore which appears to have a larger proportion of unmarried males than in England and Wales and the United States, while as regards unmarried females, she occupies an intermediate position between these countries and India.

#### POLYGAMY

Among the low castes, the wives are located in different homes. In the lower stages of civilization, women become older much sooner than in advanced communities. The liking of men is also a potent factor. Among some, the more wives, the more children, the greater power. Among the men of lower culture, manual labour is undertaken largely by women. It becomes necessary for any man who requires servants to have many wives. Polygamy has many solid weighty considerations in its favour and has resulted in the production of a very high type of individual and social development. It promotes intelligence, co-operation, and division of labour, while the keen competition for women weeds out the weaker and less attractive males.

In Kerala, polygamy is looked upon with much disfavour by the respectable classes. Even in the case of tribes and castes in which polygamy is tabooed, the large majority of men are content

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>2</sup> E. Thurston, *Ethnographic Notes in Southern India* (Madras, 1906), p. 113.

with one wife. Among advanced communities like the Nayars, polygamy has now been prohibited by law. With the spread of education, polygamy is practically dying out. A monogamic union is better fitted for the cultivation of love than a polygamic one. It is said to be highly favourable for the preservation of life in old age. Polygamy has a tendency to impoverish society by imposing in a man of ordinary means a far greater responsibility in the maintenance of children than he can afford.

#### POLYANDRY

South India is a great centre for polyandry. Its occurrence among the Pre-Dravidian tribes has already been described. Among the Dravidian population, polyandry prevails in a polyandrous form among the Kammalans. The husbands are brothers and they live with the wife in her family. Among the Kallans of Madura a woman is said to be the wife of two, six, eight, or ten husbands who are all regarded as fathers of the children. The Kaniyans of Malabar admit that fraternal polyandry was formerly common among them, but this has now died out. It is generally believed that fraternal polyandry once prevailed among the Krishnavakkakars of Travancore.<sup>1</sup> The Nayars are cited as a conspicuous example of polyandrous institutions. Portuguese and Dutch travellers of the 18th century praise the durability and fidelity of these polyandrous marriages, a fact which seems to prove that this institution must have been rooted deeply in the oldest tradition and origin of this society and was not born of a mere momentary situation, such as the prevalence of military occupations in belligerent ages. Writing about the latter half of the 18th century, Sonnerat says, 'These Brahmans do not marry, but have the privilege of enjoying the Nairresses.'

As to the present existence or non-existence of polyandry, Mateer knew of an instance of six brothers keeping two women, four husbands to one and two to the other. I have not known of an admitted instance of polyandry among the Nayars of Malabar at the present day, but there is no doubt that, if it does not exist now, it certainly did long ago.<sup>2</sup> Gopala Panikkar says that to enforce social edict upon the Nayars, the Brahmans made use of the powerful weapon of their aristocratic ascendancy in the country, and the Nayars readily submitted to the Brahman ascendancy. Thus it came about that the system of concubinage, so freely indulged in by the Brahmans with the Nayar women obtained such firm hold upon the country that it has been strengthened by the lapse of time. At the present time there are families, especially in the interior of the district, who look upon it as an honour to be thus united to the Brahmans. But a reaction has now begun to take place against this feeling and Brahman alliances are invariably looked down upon in respectable Nayar

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>2</sup> T. K. Gopala Panikkar, *Malabar and its Folk*.

tarwads. This reactionary feeling took shape in the Malabar Marriage Act.

K. M. Panikkar, whose study of present-day Nayar customs constitutes an extremely valuable contribution to our knowledge, rejects the accounts of the generation of observers concerning Nayar polyandry, though he appears to admit that fraternal polyandry was recognized. He mentions that, according to native rules, none of the travellers on whose reports our knowledge rests could have approached the house of a Nayar within 60 yards.<sup>1</sup> The late Justice K. Narayana Marar says: 'There is nothing strange or to be ashamed of in the fact that the Nayars were originally of a stock that practised polyandry, nor if the practice continued till recently. Hamilton and Buchanan say that, among the Nayars of Malabar, a woman has several husbands but these are not brothers. These travellers came to Malabar in the 18th and 19th century. There is no reason for supposing that they were not recording what they saw. For I am not sure whether even now the practice is not lurking in some remote corners of the country.'<sup>2</sup> Lastly, Wigram writes, 'Polyandry may now be said to be dead and although the issue of a Nayar marriage are still the children of the mother rather than of the father, marriage may be defined as a contract based on mutual consent, and dissoluble at will.'<sup>3</sup>

It is said that the military organization of the Nayars prevented them from living the ordinary life of husband and father of a family. Lopez de Castanheda whose account appeared about the middle of the 16th century wrote that the law interdicting them to marry was established by their kings that they might have neither wives nor children on whom to fix their love and attachment, and that, being free from all family cares they might the more devote themselves to warlike service. Although the military organization of the Nayars gives us the most probable explanation of the unusual character of polyandrous habits, it hardly accounts for such habits in full. The advantage which the Nayars derived from this source is, 'one who hath not the means to maintain a wife may have a third part of one,' and the cost of her maintenance is only in this proportion. Whether the Nayar rule of inheritance through the mother, as has been generally supposed is a consequence of their non-fraternal polyandry is difficult to say. According to some accounts, the relations between the men and the children of their mistress were of such a nature as to make any other rule impossible; but on the other hand, there are castes in the same tract who follow the uterine

<sup>1</sup> Briffault, *op. cit.*, Vol. I, p. 712.

<sup>2</sup> *Malabar Quarterly Review*, No. I, 1902.

<sup>3</sup> *Malabar Law and Custom*, 1892.

system of descent and yet have never been known to practise polyandry of the Nayar type.<sup>1</sup>

Non-fraternal polyandry, as an original and traditionally established institution, is extremely rare, if indeed it exists at all. The organization of Nayar marriage has been obscured by the circumstance that Nambutiri Brahmans were permitted to participate in marriage with Nayar women. The custom of concubinage so freely indulged in by the Brahmans with Nayar women, says Gopala Panikkar, obtained such a freehold upon the country that it has been strengthened by lapse of time.<sup>2</sup> At the present time there are families in the interior of the district which look upon it as an honour to be thus united with Brahmans. The Italian traveller Gemelli Cereri expressly states that the husbands in Nayar marriage were brothers; when one brother marries a woman, she is common to all others.

Kunjan Pillai considers that the Nayar community has been wrongly accused of being polyandrous by several oriental and western scholars. The inference is based on an imperfect appraisal of the real state of affairs. In the northern parts of Travancore, a wife never used to leave her house and live with her husband. In the south, the husband took the wife to live with him in his house. In a marumakkathayam household, the mother and her children, brothers and sisters and other relations in the female line live together. There is no objection to the wife of an elder brother moving freely with his younger brothers. It is the habit of a married man living with his wife and unmarried brothers in the same house and the privilege of free social intercourse which the women enjoy with their husband's younger brothers that led to the inference that fraternal polyandry is prevalent among the Nayars. Sexual jealousy is as strong among them as in any other civilized community.<sup>3</sup>

At the present day, enlightened opinion in the community is extremely reluctant to admit of any survival of the polyandrous customs of their ancestors, but acknowledge that a trace of it is retained in the relations between brothers. The wife of a brother, says Panikkar, is looked upon as a person to whom one could openly, though not legitimately, pay court, and any favour short of sexual relationship which she confers upon them is allowed by public opinion. All the brothers treat her half as a sister and half as a wife.<sup>4</sup> Marriage customs among the Nayars have now become almost obliterated in conformity with prevalent ideas and modern economic conditions.

<sup>1</sup> E. Westermarck, *A Short History of Marriage*, pp. 261-3.

<sup>2</sup> Gopala Panikkar, *Malabar and its Folk*, p. 22.

<sup>3</sup> N. Kunjan Pillai, *The Travancore Census Report, 1931*, p. 164.

<sup>4</sup> K. M. Panikkar, *Some Aspects of Nayar Life*, *J. R. A. L.*, Vol. XLIII, p. 293.

## SOCIAL POSITION OF WOMEN

It has been said that the social position of women is one of the truest ways of measuring the height of a people's culture. In Travancore the marumakkathayam system has always recognized the supremacy of women. She has as much right in the tarwad properties as any male member, as any other male member of the tarwad, and is therefore on an equal footing with him. No doubt in recent times the influence of the woman has waned, on account of the unauthorized assertion of authority by the man and the mismanagement of the common properties by the Karanavan. These disintegrating causes are now contributing to the break-up of the marumakkathayam system. But during the period of transition the woman is gaining her economic independence as in the west where equality of sexes in all walks of life has been established. She refuses to be a slave of the other sex. This attitude is seen prominently in the women of the educated communities. The high degree of education attained by the women of Travancore and the liberal policy pursued by Government in the matter of appointments to State services and of the representation on political institutions without distinction of sex have contributed not a little to make the women of the country self-reliant and self-dependent. Women have for a long time been employed in the State in the education and medical departments, and appointments in other departments are also thrown open to them. They have got the right to vote. This State was the first to confer franchise on women. The phenomenal progress that women have made in education, the economic independence they are gaining and the political consciousness that has been awakened in them have begun to act as a brake on their desire to enter into matrimonial bondage. Several of them are content to remain single, earning their livelihood by their own labours.<sup>1</sup>

## INFLUENCE OF CIVILIZATION ON SEXUAL MATTERS

Contact with higher culture has proved pernicious to the morality of primitive peoples. Irregular connections between the sexes have, on the whole, exhibited a tendency to increase with the progress of civilization, for, it would seem, according to Heape, highly probable that the reproductive power of man has increased with civilization. In the words of Havelock Ellis, a man is a man to his thumbs, and a woman down to her toes. A masculine body implies a masculine mind, and a feminine body carries even more significant implications. The Mannans, the Paliyans, and the Malapulayas have become demoralized with contact with the planting community on the hills, while among the higher caste Dravidian population, new problems have arisen. The proportion of unmarried people and the marriage age are known to have risen in recent times. One important cause of the

<sup>1</sup> N. Kunjan Pillai, *Travancore Census Report, 1931*, pp. 169-70.

decline in marriage is the difficulty of supporting a family in modern society. Generally speaking, the average age of marriage is more advanced among the higher classes than in the lower ones. The increasing economic independence of women has begun to make itself felt. Lastly, the tastes of men and women have become widened, their desires multiplied, and new gratifications and pleasures have been supplied to them. The domestic life does not fill so large a place in life.

Great difference of age in marriage is fatal to close sympathy since similar objects and interests are associated with similar periods of life, and these with similar intensity of sexual desire. Among primitive tribes, the difference in marriageable age does not tend to be greater in Travancore, because marriage is the *sine qua non* of their existence. The modern tendency to shorten the difference in marriage age is achieved by increase in marriage age for females to approximate to the male postponement of marriage. A note of warning is struck, 'Between the age of 15 and 25 are ten long years. During these years, the mate hunger impulse cannot be put to sleep or locked in closet.'<sup>1</sup> The earlier years are the most fecund years and postponement of marriage reduces fecundity.

It is observed that domestic life does not fill so large a place in life. Until recently, it was a woman-made world we lived in. The mere male had to go outside the world to work off his surplus energy. The wife mother was the centre of the home and it was to her interest to make it a real centre. It became a hive of industry and a swarm of children. Whatever glorified it magnified her importance. Within, she was supreme. In this woman-made world, men passed half their lives, the other half was spent in bringing home the bacon. Now women have their rights. In obtaining rights, she abdicated a throne. She no longer rules by divine right. The children that bless the home are turned over to the nurse, while mother presides at bridge, over committees to cleanse the slums. Result—males no longer naively accept matrimony or implicitly trust their wives. Females turn to matrimony if they have nowhere else to turn.<sup>2</sup> Tagore says, 'It is not by coming out of the home that woman can gain her liberty. Her liberation can only be effected in a society where her true shakti, her ananda, is given the widest and highest scope.'

C. E. M. Joad says: 'Aspire only to those virtues familiar to your sex and think it your greatest commendation not to be talked of among men for good or evil. The greatest woman, according to Pericles, is one of whom no one has heard.' Keyserling regarded marriage as a duty and resents the thought that one should expect to get happiness outside it.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Dorsey, *Why We Behave like Human Beings*, p. 445.

<sup>2</sup> Keyserling, *The Book of Marriage*: Tagore, *The Indian Ideal of Marriage*, p. 121.

<sup>3</sup> Calverton, *Sex in Civilization*, p. 231.



## TWO BONDO MURDERERS

BY VERRIER ELWIN

DURING my 1945 tour in the Bondo country of Orissa I got to know two convicted murderers who had been released from jail, Sonia Sisa of Katamguda and Muliya Dangra-Manjhi of Mundli-pada. I know many murderers, but few have impressed me so much as these. Both stood out among their fellows. They were obviously liked and respected. They had matured in a hard school. They had seen the world. They had contacted civilization and had survived it. I thought that jail had done both of them a great deal of good. They were simple, unsophisticated, with their tribal loyalties unimpaired. They had certainly learnt good manners in prison. They were almost pathetically anxious to oblige. Yet they were by no means obsequious. They did not protest their innocence or pretend that they had been badly treated. They accepted their tragic experience as part of what life had to offer, and made the best of it. I believe the stories which I shall set down here to be true. I do not know what the judge decided at their trials.<sup>1</sup> But the test of innocence or guilt was long since over, and neither man was trying to prove anything to me; he simply told his story, with an astonishing simplicity. I will give Sonia's account first.

Sonia is a very good-looking man. When I met him he had only recently returned from his years in jail and was busy getting his house ready before the rains. He was very fond of my little son, and made him a bow and arrow and entertained him in many ways. He did a lot of work for me, but never asked for anything in return. A rather unusual Bondo. Here is his story. It happened in 1930.

Kaliya Mundli of Andrahal had a field, but one day Ghasi Sisa said, 'This field is mine. Long ago your parents gave it to me in payment for a sacrifice I performed on their behalf.' Kaliya said, 'I have never heard of this before; I have been ploughing the field all these years; why have you come to me now?' The discussion about it went on and on, until at last Ghasi brought a bullock and tied it up at Kaliya's door saying, 'We gave a bullock to your parents when they gave us the field; now I return you the bullock; you give us the field and we will quarrel no more.'

But Kaliya said, 'I don't want your bullock and I'm going to keep the field.' He untethered the animal and drove it away. That evening—it was a Tuesday—Kaliya called the elders to the *sindibor*<sup>2</sup> and they discussed the matter. Kaliya's elder brother Sukro Mundli said, 'This field is ours; when did our parents give it away? We have been culti-

<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately I was unable to find either of the case-files in the Record Room at Koraput.

<sup>2</sup> The sacred stone platform in the middle of a Bondo village.

vating it for years and now suddenly Ghasi claims it. Who has taught him this trick?' When he heard this Ghasi got very angry and he got up and hit Sukro over the head with a great stick and broke it open. The next day—a Wednesday—I myself went with Kaliya, Sukro and Lachhi Mundli to make a report to the Nandpur police.

Now Tio, Gulong and Ghasi Sisa were three sons of the same parents and of the Tiger *bonso*. I, who am also son of a Tiger, am distantly related to them from the same grandparents. Somra, Soma and Kaliya Mundli, of the Cobra clan, were three sons of three brothers who in turn were the sons of the same parents. While I was away with the Mundli party, the three Sisa brothers went to the Mundli houses and beat up the womenfolk, dragging them out and damaging the walls and verandahs of the buildings. The police kept us till the Saturday, and in our absence the three brothers were continually abusing and bullying our families. On the Saturday evening we returned to Nandpur and saw the damage that had been done. But we thought, 'We have called the police and they will soon be here. It is better to keep quiet and not cause further trouble.'

But the police were a long time in coming; if they had been a little more expeditious, they might have averted the tragedy that was so swiftly approaching. On the Sunday, Monday and Tuesday mornings the three Sisa brothers appear to have spent a lot of time showing off. Naturally every morning the Mundli party, together with Sonia who seems to have gone over completely to their side, had to go for their daily drink of juice from the sago palms. Nothing could interrupt that. In their absence, every morning the Sisa brothers went into their houses, frightened and abused the womenfolk and did what we may call symbolic damage to the houses: they pulled straw from the roof, and relieved themselves against the walls. But it is noticeable that although Sonia and his friends were perfectly well aware what would happen in their absence, it does not seem even to have occurred to them to give up going to the forest for their morning drink or even to have sent one member of the party for it while the others remained on guard. A characteristic, and remarkable, trait of aboriginal psychology. But let us allow Sonia to continue his story.

On the Tuesday I went with Soma Mundli to Katamguda to drink palm wine. While we were away the three brothers threw stones at my younger brother Lachhim Sisa while he was at work plastering a house. They did not hit him but they nearly did. Lachhim was frightened and ran away to hide in the jungle. His mother-in-law came to find him and not seeing him anywhere decided that he had been killed and came screaming after us to Katamguda. We ran home

and not finding the boy began to look for him in the forest. At last we found a group of boys—they were Lachhim, Budha Sisa, Malu Mundli and Sukro Mundli, all young boys—sitting under the trees weeping for fright. We encouraged them saying, 'We must not be afraid. If they hit us we will hit them.' We brought them back to Andrahal and they sat in the house of Soma Mundli's father.

Then along came Gulong with his axe and he began to break down the door of Lachhim's house, but after he had given the door a few blows he went away, I don't know why. After that we all went to the forest to the palm trees for drink, and the three Sisa brothers went to their palm trees. In the evening when we returned we found that Gulong had killed the two she-goats of Domu Mundli. Now Domu Mundli was Sukro Mundli's brother's son. Domu met us with a great outcry about this, but we said, 'Let him kill a few goats; that is better than his killing men.' For we were all afraid of what he might do.

The police still had not come on the Wednesday morning, and both parties went for their liquor as usual. The Sisa group got home first and performed their routine insults to the Mundli houses. Sonia and his friends now decided that if the police did not come that day they would go on the Thursday morning, after the usual drink of palm wine, to report the matter again at Nandpur.

But on the Thursday morning, Sonia's party were a little late in getting back to Andrahal, and they found the Sisa brothers, all drunk, beating at their houses with their axes. Sonia's party got alarmed at this and thought that they might well be killed. Probably from some vague idea that offence was the best form of offence, Soma Mundli attacked Tio Sisa with his axe, striking him in the back.

The blade sank into his back and he could not pull it out. Tio ran about fifty paces with Soma after him holding on to the handle of the axe, and then fell down. Soma then pulled out the axe and chopped him again and again all over his body. Somra Mundli was standing about twenty paces away, and when Ghasi Sisa heard what was happening he came up trembling with rage and shot with his bow at Somra. His first arrow flew wide to the left, the second to the right, but as he was about to shoot a third time Somra caught hold of him and threw him on the ground. He called Soma and he came at once, leaving Tio who was almost dead. Soma struck Ghasi several times with his axe on the chest and the man died on the spot.

Then Gulong came running to me—I was watching the scene about twenty paces away. He shouted 'You've had

my brothers killed,' and slapped me twice in the face. I had a razor in my hand and I slashed at Gulong's throat saying, 'I'll kill you as well.' But Gulong folded his hands and bowed to me saying, 'No, between you and me there is truth (*sat*); we are of the same *kuda* and *bonso*; we will be friends; at least spare my life.' I let him go and he ran away and hid in his house.

The next day the Bariko took a report to the Nandpur police and on the third day a Head Constable came and on the fourth the Sub-Inspector. They tied me up with Soma Mundli, Kaliya Mundli and Somra Mundli and took us with the two corpses and Gulong, whom I had wounded, to Matthili. There the doctor examined the corpses and we burnt them; Gulong was soon cured in the hospital and we confessed that we had killed our enemies, for if we had not they would certainly have killed us. For seven days we were kept at Matthili, then we were taken to Malkangiri and confessed again. We were kept there for three months, then five constables took us on foot to Jeypore. From there we went by bus to Koraput; we were two days in the jail there and then went to Vizagapatam. We were not afraid until we reached Koraput, but when we left our own country and went to Vizagapatam we said, 'Now our lives are ended. In our absence Gulong will certainly murder our wives and children.' Some told us, 'You are going to be hanged.' Others said, 'You will get twenty years.' After our trial we were given twenty years each. We were taken to Rajamundry for six months and there I learnt weaving and how to make blankets. It was nice to get three good meals a day. Thence I was taken to Madras and was kept there for six-and-a-half years. I used to work on a paper machine. At that time I used often to remember my home. I would dream that I was climbing a sago palm to get the juice and that the three Sisa brothers came and shot at me with their arrows. Often I saw these brothers coming to murder me and in my dream I would hide in a pit or in the thick jungle to escape them. But when I learnt to work the paper machine properly I was so interested that I forgot my home.

From Madras we were taken to Berhampore. There we were made to break stones. But I was made Mate and it was a good job; I simply had to order the others about and see that they worked. But we were greatly troubled in Berhampore and felt very homesick. At this time we planned how to escape. But soon we were taken to Cuttack and during the year I was there I became a Convict Warder. But then I was taken to Sambalpur and Somra and Soma to Koraput and Kaliya was left at Cuttack. We were very sad

at being separated, but we could do nothing. I was six years at Sambalpur and worked there as Convict Warder. At the end of that time the Jail Babu called me and said, 'You were forgiven; you just escaped being hanged. Now go home to your family. Quarrel no more. Go and live peacefully with your family, for next time you'll certainly be hanged.'

There now begins what seems to me the most moving part of the whole story. Sonia was given a railway pass as far as Bobbili, fifty rupees in cash and his freedom. His journey, by bus from Bobbili to Koraput and thence home on foot, cost him eighteen rupees. On the way he bought twelve rupees worth of cloth for his wife and children. He had never had so much cash in his hands before. He was a free man. For a few days he felt like a king. On the train, somehow scenting his simplicity, the beggars thronged round him; to one he gave four annas, to another eight and to a blind man a whole rupee. His face glowed as he described these gifts; he had got a tremendous kick out of bestowing them. He, Sonia, a poor murderous savage, was able to give alms to civilization.

When he reached Guneypada he picked up a Dom of Andrahal and went with him to Katamguda where his wife and children had been living in her father's house all these years. They had never been able to come and see him; he had not once had a visitor in jail. He seems to have been nervous of going straight home and the Dom took him to the Challan's house. The Challan, not recognizing him, abused the Dom for bringing a 'Paik' (official) to his house; 'How am I to feed him?' he asked. But the Dom explained who the visitor was and the news spread round the village and the people gathered and greeted him with tears.

But his jail life had rendered Sonia an outcaste, and that evening he was not allowed to feed with his wife and children and he had to sleep separately in a place apart. After fifteen years of abstinence, he was not permitted to approach his wife. But the very next day he was readmitted to the Bondo fellowship. He gave a feast of a pig, two rupees worth of liquor and a new pot full of rice. His father-in-law cut his hair. They built an *orpa* arch of branches across the stream at the bottom of the village and Sonia had to go under it seven times. Each time the father-in-law threw a little of the pig's blood on his back. After the seventh time he touched Sonia's left breast with a heated rupee coin. Over him he threw water in which gold, silver, cow-dung and the tulsi plant had been dipped and made him drink some of it—an obvious Hindu rite. Finally Sonia stood before the people with folded

<sup>1</sup> The warning against continuing the feud was all the more necessary because the enmity between the Sisas and Mundlis of Andrahal did not cease with the tragic events of 1930, but went on until it culminated in the murder of Domu Mundli by Ghasi Sisa's son Sonia on 14 January 1941 in revenge for the death of his father and uncle.

hands and said, 'We quarrelled with Ghasi Sisa, Tio and Gulong and so I went for fifteen years to jail. But I have survived and I have returned home. Now you have taken me back. Now the *sairem* (the dead) have recognized me again. From today I will never offend. From today I will regard every man as my true brother.'<sup>1</sup>

The villagers replied, 'As you acted so have you suffered. Now you have come home. Quarrel no more. If you get drunk, do not let yourself talk, but go aside and sit quietly in a corner.' And they all repeated, 'Do not quarrel any more.' Then the father-in-law drank a little palm juice and gave what was left in the cup to Sonia. Sonia took a sip and handed it back. They handed each other rice. Sonia's troubles were over. He was home and back in the tribe. That evening he rejoined his family.

The case of Muliya Dangra-Manjhi of Mundlipada is, to my mind, equally tragic, perhaps even more tragic, for his criminal career—he has been in jail four times—began with what one might call a drunken accident. Muliya is now a man of about forty, good-looking, with a pleasant kindly face. He has excellent manners and was most helpful to me in every way. He told his story very simply and I suspect that it is mostly true.

In Badpada (a hamlet about a quarter of a mile from Mundlipada) I bought a sago palm for ten rupees; the juice was so abundant that I had to keep two pots tied to the tree and was able to sell the juice for a rupee a day. In Mundlipada lived my *mahaprasad*<sup>2</sup> Ghasi Mundli; one day he was performing the Dagoi Gige<sup>3</sup> for his wife, and the visitors went to my tree and stole the juice; they not only took the juice, they helped themselves also to the pot, the rope and the knife. When I went to the tree next morning, I found nothing. I went home and sat on the verandah. I said to myself, 'If I go to the Dagoi Gige without a present of liquor I will be put to shame.' So I did not join the party till the afternoon when everyone went out along the path for the final offerings. My *mahaprasad* said, 'Why didn't you come this morning?' I replied, 'I hadn't got any liquor to bring.' 'Never mind,' said my *mahaprasad*. 'There is plenty in the house' and he took me in and brought out palm wine from my own tree in my own pot for me to drink. When I recognized my pot, I said to my *mahaprasad*, 'There is no pot on my tree and the juice is trickling down wastefully. Pour this wine into something and let me have this pot for my tree.' My

<sup>1</sup> The word is *soru-bhai*, one who eats the same sacrificial food (*soru*), member of the same village community.

<sup>2</sup> The highest degree of covenanted friendship, common throughout Middle India.

<sup>3</sup> A domestic ceremony performed once for a husband and once for a wife during their lifetime.

*mahaprasad* did as I suggested and I tied a cord round the neck of the pot and hung it over my arm. I ate and drank and prepared to go home.

But Budha Mundli caught me by the arm and said, 'Come and have something to drink.' He took me to his house, and he too offered me my own wine in my other pot. I got him also to empty it and give it to me and I tied it over my other shoulder. But Budha said, 'What do you want with two pots?' and began to shout at me. I said, 'Because both my pots are broken,' and I got out of the house and away to Badpada as quickly as I could. I tied the pots to the tree and meeting three men going towards Mundlipada went with them back to my house.

When I got back I went to my *mahaprasad* and Budha and said to them, 'You robbed me of my juice. Never mind. It was for drinking and you have drunk it. Now give me back the three other pots you took and the rope and knife.' But they began to quarrel and picked up their axes to beat me. I ran home and got out two knives and my axe. As I was returning towards them I saw under a tamarind tree a pregnant she-goat belonging to a Dom. I had a knife in each hand and I stabbed the goat and it fell dead. I was very drunk and I cut the animal in half with my axe. Two baby goats came out of the belly. Everyone was pleased and we all, friends and enemies, roasted the flesh on the spot and ate it. But I kept the baby goats for myself. Presently the Dom came along demanding the price of the goat. The people said, 'We didn't kill it; you will have to get the money out of Muliya.' I had gone home by then and the Dom came and sat in my house. I gave him palm wine and some of his own roast meat. It was dark and while he was eating he secretly removed one of the baby goats and hid it in his cloth. The next morning he took it to the police and reported against me.

The police came and arrested me and took me to Matthili first and then to Malkangiri. The Magistrate said, 'You are fined eight score rupees.' I said, 'I haven't got so much in the world. The most I can pay is forty.' The Magistrate said, 'No, you must bring it all or go to jail for fifteen days.' Then I said to myself, 'Why should I waste such a lot of money? In jail I'll get good food; there will be nothing to worry about and I'll save my money.' So I went to jail. But in my turn I reported against the people who stole my things and they were fined twenty-five rupees each. When I came home from jail I had to pay five rupees to the village for a purification feast.

This happened a year before I was married. Two years

later I married a second wife. I began to live happily with my two wives.

My father's name was Mangla Dangra-Manjhi. He had three brothers—the eldest Ujje, the next Muliya, then my father, and the youngest, Gulong. I am Mangla's only son. We had some very good harvests, and Gulong grew jealous of me. He began to think 'Mangla has only this one son; if he were to die, then Mangla would adopt me and in the end I would get the fields and cattle.' With this in mind he made magic against me and I was desperately ill for fifteen days. My parents called the Dissari and had me cured, but for a time I was very weak. When I got better I longed intensely for palm wine. So one day on a Wednesday, very early in the morning, while it was still dark, I took two annas and went to buy some wine at Dattipada. At the same time my father went to our own tree. Gulong that very morning was plotting to murder us both. He took his bow and arrows and went to my house. One of my wives was warming herself at the fire and the other was husking grain; it was still dark. Gulong asked where I was. They said, 'He has gone for palm wine.' Gulong shouted, 'If he and his father were here I would have eaten their flesh with stale rice; but as they have gone to the palm trees I will eat their flesh with fresh liquor.' Gulong hurried home, called out his wife and armed with an axe and a knife went to our palm tree. On the way he met the Naiko (headman) of Mundlipada and abused him. A little farther on he met my father coming home and began to quarrel. Both Gulong and his wife beat my father and he fell unconscious to the ground. They thought he was dead and left him lying there. When I got back from Dattipada I was drunk and I had some more juice in a gourd. I went to the tree at Bodapada and lay down at its foot. In the evening my father recovered and came to search for me. When I saw him covered with blood I asked him what had happened, but he said that he had fallen from a tree. He did not tell me about the quarrel for fear I would get excited and try to kill Gulong.

In the evening I went home and my wives gave me water for a bath. After I had eaten supper, I was going to sleep on the verandah, but they told me what Gulong had been saying and insisted on my sleeping inside with the door shut. The next morning, the Thursday, my father was up very early and took his bullocks to his field to plough. I went to get juice from a palm tree near the field and took my cousin, Ujje's son, Sonia, with me. Soon after I had left Gulong came to my house and again told my wives what he was going to do to me. He followed us down to the field. He abused



my father and smashed the plough with his axe. When I heard what was going on I shouted at him, and this diverted Gulong from my father and he came to attack me instead. He came along waving his axe in the air, but I too had an axe and I struck his, cutting it in half. Then I hit him hard with the blunt end on the side of the head and he fell senseless. Sonia picked up the axes and hid them. I sat down at the foot of the tree and had a drink.

But as we sat watching him, Gulong sat up slowly and twirled his moustache at us. He said, 'Now I'm going to get my bow and arrows, and I'm going to kill father and son and throw their bodies away together.' I said to myself, 'This man is certainly going to kill us.' So I seized my stick and before he could do anything I struck him on the head and back and belly. But he took no notice, he just stood there abusing me. I broke his arm; we could see the bone sticking out; but he rubbed it and it healed. His head swelled under my blows to double the size, but he rubbed it and it healed. Then I struck the front of his head and the stick sank in as if it had been an axe and the blood spurted out, but he rubbed it and the place was healed. At last I hit him very hard on the back of the head and he fell forward, and I gave five heavy blows on his back. But he just turned over and said, 'Now hit me on the chest,' and I beat him there until he fainted. Now I thought he would certainly die, so I sat down and had another drink and then went home.

In the evening Sonia and I went down to the palm tree again for our evening drink of wine and found Gulong still alive. I gave him two leaf-cups of wine to drink, for I thought, 'He is bound to die, but let him have a drink before he does.' Then I went home. The next morning while it was still dark we went to the tree again and there was Gulong sitting up warming himself at a fire at the foot of the tree. When I saw him I was very frightened. I did not dare go near, for I thought, 'Nothing can save us now. It is impossible to kill this man.' I did not dare approach, but I sent Sonia to fetch the wine. He gave some to Gulong and brought the rest to me. Gulong drank the wine and then looked up twirling his moustache at me. I drank also and then quietly picked up a heavy stone and went near and hurled it down on his head with all my strength again and again till the head was smashed and he was quite dead. Then we sat down and drank the rest of the palm wine, and at last went home leaving the body there.

On the following Tuesday came the police. They arrested me and took me and the corpse down to Matthili. When the doctor tried to cut open Gulong's head two or four of his knives broke, the head was so hard. Then they took me

to Malkangiri, and to Jeypore and Koraput where I got two years' imprisonment.

When I was released, the Jail Babu gave me seven rupees eight annas to get home and told me to work hard and not to quarrel any more. When I got back to Mundlipada, I gave the villagers five rupees, and we had a feast and pig's blood was sprinkled on me as I passed under an *orpa* arch. So I was cleansed of the defilement of jail.

After this I spent a happy year at home, but one day Sonia, my cousin, quarrelled with Hadi Kirsani of Bodoballe under a sago palm near Kappor Chua. To stop them I slapped each of them, but Hadi turned on me shouting, 'What are you interfering for?' and hit me with his axe. I caught hold of it, wrenched it from his hands and beat him senseless with the handle. I carried him home, but his brothers reported the matter to the police and I was arrested again. I was three months on remand and then got a year's rigorous imprisonment. Sonia only got three months.

Yet again I got into trouble. For, about a year after I was released, Ghasi Sisa one day took his cattle to my field and let them feed on my grain. I went to demand compensation and he gave me a she-goat. I refused to accept it, and asked for more. I was going away when several men followed me and forced me to take the goat. It was difficult to refuse any longer, so we killed and roasted it on the spot and all ate it together. But when they had finished they went to the police with a report that I had stolen the animal. This time I was two months on remand and got a two months' sentence.

In jail Muliya chiefly suffered from the deprivation of his morning drink of palm wine, which, as his story so clearly shows, nothing was ever permitted to disturb. He said that he often used to worry whether his two wives were remaining faithful to him and, during the first long sentence, whether his father was alive or dead, whether his fields were giving a good crop, whether Gulong's family were trying to take revenge. He said that in his dreams he was often tormented by the *sairem* of Gulong: 'he used to come and abuse me, and in my dream it was always he who killed me. As long as I was in the jail his *sairem* came to trouble me. He used to offer me palm wine, but I knew it was full of his magic and I dared not drink it.' It was only when Muliya was released that he was free of these visitations from Gulong's *sairem*. This appears, indeed, to be the usual rule. Until the penalty has been worked out, a murderer is liable to a supernatural punishment, to visitations from his victim's *sairem*. But once the sentence is finished he seems to be safe; the *sairem*'s honour is satisfied, and it leaves him alone.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A Bison-horn Maria once said to me—he was referring to a released convict: 'If Government has forgiven him, why shouldn't the gods forgive?'

## NOTES AND QUERIES

ORIGINAL notes, queries, answers to queries, quotations from journals and newspapers for this section should be sent to Verrier Elwin, D.Sc. (Oxon), F.N.I., Patangarh P.O., Dindori Tahsil, Mandla District. Contributors are requested to type in double space on one side of the paper only, to give full and exact references and to follow carefully the suggestions 'To Contributors' published from time to time in *Man in India*.

### THE URAON DHUMKURIA

Uraon dhumkurias or bachelors' dormitories occur in the Bero, Mandar and Ranchi police stations of Ranchi district, Chota Nagpur, and there is evidence that at one time they also existed in Lohardaga thana. Within this area they are vital Uraon institutions with their own internal organization, their own rules of business and their own halls. Outside this area they are not at present any trace of them, although Uraons are distributed throughout the Gumla, Sadr and Simdega subdivisions and the States of Surguja and Jashpur. There is, however, a general custom of segregating the village boys from their parents at night and bedding them down in a spare room of the village. The latter custom is merely a sleeping arrangement. The former institution is a definite organization of youth.

This contrast of institutions within the same tribe raises a number of problems. Why, for instance, is the dhumkuria at present confined to a single small area and is absent from the greater part of the Uraon country? If at one time it characterized the tribe as a whole why has it decayed in the areas least affected by extraneous influence but yet has preserved an obstinate vitality in the area closest to Ranchi? If it was never general but was only the product of a small area why did one section of the Uraons develop it and not others? These questions can only be answered by a systematic recording of Uraon institutions in all parts of the Uraon country and without such a record no final answer will be possible. It is also desirable that all the factors affecting the growth and decay of dhumkurias should be observed and as an aid to this research I record below a list of Uraon dhumkurias as they existed at the time of the decennial census in 1941. In certain places the village emblem is also housed in the dhumkuria and wherever possible I have noted the emblem and the village. If at any future date another census is taken it may well be possible to see how far this interesting institution is surviving.

### BERO P.S.

#### VILLAGES WITH DHUMKURIAS AND EMBLEMS

|          |                   |       |                 |
|----------|-------------------|-------|-----------------|
| Tuko     | Radha Charkha     | Malti | Two Bullocks    |
| Kuli     | Elephant          | Nari  | Bull and Chawar |
| Gargaoan | Ghanta and Chawar | Itki  | Horse           |
|          | Kundi             | Horse |                 |

#### VILLAGES WITH DHUMKURIAS AND NO EMBLEMS

|               |            |         |           |
|---------------|------------|---------|-----------|
| Kairo         | Chamgain   | Purio   | Mahugaon  |
| Tengaria      | Murto      | Hulsi   | Semra     |
| Balrampur     | Duru       | Saka    | Baridih   |
| Chachkapi     | Saora      | Bhandra | Bindhain  |
| Tutlo         | Hariharpur | Targari | Chachgera |
| Itta          | Nurma      | Palna   | Makunda   |
| Rani Khatanga | Juria      | Kurgi   | Moro      |

## TERO

## VILLAGES WITH EMBLEMS AND NO DHUMKURIAS

|               |              |                |               |
|---------------|--------------|----------------|---------------|
| Dighia        | Elephant     | Kudarko        | Horse         |
| Nehari        | Horse        | Lambkana       | Elephant      |
| Danr Kendaria | Fish         | Pahar Kendaria | <i>Ghanta</i> |
| Kotpali       | <i>Pinja</i> | Khatanga       | Peacock       |

## RANCHI P.S.

## VILLAGES WITH DHUMKURIAS AND EMBLEMS

|         |                        |            |               |
|---------|------------------------|------------|---------------|
| Bahambe | Camel and <i>Palki</i> | Belangi    | Horse         |
| Kota    | Horse                  | Chitarkota | Four bullocks |
| Nagri   | Elephant               | Mati toli  | Elephant      |

## VILLAGES WITH DHUMKURIAS AND NO EMBLEMS

|         |            |             |           |             |
|---------|------------|-------------|-----------|-------------|
| Ratu    | Bhaura     | Katu Lahana | Pali      | Nawatoli    |
| Lahua   | Makhmandoo | Dhurua      | Deori     | Nagrichauli |
| Tigra   | Panrepat   | Pugru       | Banapirhi | Saparong    |
| Agru    | Purio      | Kota        | Gutua     | Barsa       |
| Pandhua | Hehel      | Simalia     | Tarup     | Loda        |
| Upardah | Chipra     | Kolambi     | Jojpur    | Kudlaong    |
|         |            | Chauli      |           |             |

## VILLAGES WITH EMBLEMS AND NO DHUMKURIAS

Nil

## MANDAR P.S.

## VILLAGES WITH DHUMKURIAS AND EMBLEMS

|              |               |           |                         |
|--------------|---------------|-----------|-------------------------|
| Koko         | Bamboo        | Uchari    | <i>Rampa and Chalpa</i> |
| Raghunathpur | Horse         | Charki    | <i>Magar</i>            |
| Kangia       | <i>Magar</i>  | Bajra     | Horse                   |
| Mandar       | Fish          | Bargari   | <i>Chalpa</i>           |
| Karkara      | Horse         | Chind     | Two bullocks            |
| Silligain    | <i>Darehi</i> | Barambey  | Camel                   |
| Kaimbo       | Horse         | Do        | <i>Palki</i>            |
| Banjhila     | Fish          | Kanbhitha | Two tigers              |
|              |               | Nagra     | Two tigers              |

## VILLAGES WITH DHUMKURIAS AND NO EMBLEMS

|              |                      |            |          |
|--------------|----------------------|------------|----------|
| Sapartatu    | Pumgi                | Silagain   | Gorkho   |
| Kamati       | Taranga              | Murguli    | Murkuni  |
| Lemdri       | Choreya              | Sargaon    | Nero     |
| Ghughri      | Karkat Benjhara tola | Gurgujari  | Gore     |
| Tigoi        | Rol                  | Basjori    | Khukra   |
| Chatwal      | Bejupara             | Mahuajari  | Totambi  |
| Koth Chancha | Hutar                | Darji jari | Jhujhari |
|              |                      | Koramba    |          |

W. G. ARCHER

## 'CIVILIZATION'

THE following passage, written sixty years ago by S. E. Peal, is interesting in view of the present day theories about the civilization of the aboriginals.

'The usual result of all attempts to civilize the unsophisticated savage right off is to exterminate him; there is need of an intermediate stage of some duration in which our civilized stimulants and smartness are not experienced. A stage during which the savage surroundings and traditions can die down, if not die out, and render the new generation free to see, and adopt, what is advantageous.'

'Freedom to adopt our vices is hurtful, and our later civilization should so to speak be administered by a spoon. Unless we turn attention to these matters we shall find that the growth of "intelligence" among these Hill savages is also a growth in our difficulties in dealing with them.'—S. E. Peal, 'Notes of a trip up the Dihing basin to Dapha Pani, &c., January and February, 1882', *J.A.S.B.*, Vol. LII, Part II (Nos. I to II, 1883), p. 8.

V. E.

#### HUMAN SACRIFICE IN HYDERABAD

A CASE of human sacrifice occurred in the Adilabad District of Hyderabad State at the end of September last by one Gangaram described as Parkawad by caste (I have not found the name of this caste in any list of tribes and castes but according to local enquiry it is a local agricultural caste fairly common in the Telugu districts of Hyderabad and akin to the Kapu caste), a man of twenty-five years, who went out in the afternoon on the day of the Dasehra festival to perform the *bonal puja* in his field. The *bonal puja* is a common ceremony in the Telugu villages for propitiating local godlings and the Dasehra festival is considered a particularly auspicious time for the ceremony; usually rice and curds are offered and the image is smeared with vermillion and turmeric. Sometimes a pig or chicken is sacrificed and there is a belief in various parts of the State that the burial of a live pig in a field after the performance of this *puja* improves the crop. Gangaram took with him his younger brother, Pochiah a boy of twelve, a Bhoi named Gangiah, and, as offerings for the *puja*, cooked rice, a pig and a fowl. On the way he sent Pochiah to fetch a Dhobi boy named Bhumanna twelve years old on the plea that he was wanted to cut the throat of the sacrificial fowl. When Bhumanna arrived, Gangaram, Gangiah and Pochiah went with him to the field which they reached at about 4 p.m. Gangaram instructed Gangiah to bury the pig alive in the middle of the field where the *juar* was high, while he with Pochiah and Bhumanna proceeded to a rock some fifty feet away, worshipped in the name of Vankala Sanma Deo, ostensibly there to sacrifice the fowl and perform the rest of the *bonal puja*. When Gangiah had finished burying the pig he started to join the others by the rock but saw Gangaram running after Bhumanna with a knife in his hand. Gangaram caught Bhumanna and killed him by stabbing him in the throat. At this Gangiah and Pochiah were so scared that they ran away from the field to the village, where Gangiah told Bhumanna's mother how her son had been sacrificed. When arrested next day Gangaram stated that he had sacrificed Bhumanna as a substitute for his own brother Pochiah, since the night before Vankala Sanma Deo had appeared to Gangaram's father in a dream and asked him to sacrifice his son Pochiah as a thank-offering for the excellent *juar* crop in his field.

So the case is an interesting extension to the Telingana country of the connection in the popular mind between human blood and fertility. The substitute sacrifice of live pigs is still quite common. A few years ago in Warangal city cultivators were permitted in a year when there was a long break in the rains to take water from a tank normally closed to irrigation in order to save the rice crop. Water had not been taken from the tank for this purpose for many years. When the sluice was opened, a live pig was buried alive up to the head, so that all water passing out to the fields might first have flown over the sacrificial victim.

W. V. GRIGSON

## REVIEWS

VERRIER ELWIN and SHAMRAO HIVALE, *Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills* (Oxford University Press, Bombay), Rs. 15.

HERE, indeed, is God's plenty. This is the most impressive collection of translations of folk-songs I have seen, not only because of the number and variety of the songs but because of the sustained quality of the selection and the beauty and excellence of the translations. To have made almost faultless translations of well over six hundred songs is an achievement indeed.

The difficulties felt in transplanting poetry from one language to another are well known to those who have attempted it and who have a genuine feeling for words and rhythm. Some of the pitfalls that lie in the path of the unwary translator have been discussed in the introduction to the volume. It is so easy to fall between the stools of the intolerably poetical and the crassly prosaic. And it is even more difficult to translate folk-songs than poems that are based upon distinct literary conventions, since it is comparatively easier to find equivalents for literary phrases and images than to find the exact word that will translate the intimate and esoteric meaning given to words in popular poetry. It is a pleasure to read in this book translations that have neither the cheap picturesqueness of the mass-produced Swinburnian nor the monotonous jingle of the balladesque. The style is free from echoes of familiar poetic conventions but never descends to the bare and angular. What they give us is essential poetry.

One of the most important functions of poetry is that it enlarges our apprehension of relationships between disparate things and between one's individuality and the world of objective realities. It is a process of assimilation of unrelated experiences into a highly unified pattern. In one of his more prophetic poems Blake says that 'creation is God descending to the level of a caterpillar.' I believe that all creative activity is like that. The world without has to be strained within the poet's sensibility, which is the point where all things find their fairs and live after they have undergone the necessary changes. The poems in the anthology show very clearly how complete is the assimilation of environments and everyday contacts with outside realities by these aboriginals who seem able to transmute all their experiences into memorable songs. Though there are definite conventions followed in the verse, there does not seem to be any of that false distinction between the poetic and unpoetic subject and vocabulary, which spoils such a good deal of Romantic, Victorian and Georgian verse in English. New words as well as new subjects are easily admitted into their pattern without criticism and cavil, the only criterion being the impression they make upon the sensibility. And there is no self-consciousness about the use of words like motor car, railway train, jail and driver that are sometimes woven into their earlier epics and poems as well. In this, they show themselves better artists than some of our so-called 'modern' poets.

The aboriginal makes poetry out of the raw material and daily experiences of life: there is perhaps no better way of making it. He is rarely ambitious and the attempt to organize experiences into a complex pattern is hardly ever his objective. The few longer poems given in the collection are chaotic and jump from incident to incident which themselves seem like straws that are seized upon in sheer desperation. His real forte is the short lyric crystallizing a mood or a definite feeling that seems to well up in a continuous overflow under the pressure of that alert interest he takes in life and its ever ranging phases strewn around him. His mode of consciousness is primarily emotional; experiences are felt along the invisible sensitive antennae he is constantly waving around him. Phenomena, habits and professions that are merely uncomfortable or dull or unfortunately necessary to others are for him heightened into poignant or oppressive experiences by his sensibility and express themselves in songs. His vivid awareness of life is the main secret of his artistic strength.

What I am trying to emphasize is that these songs are not to be judged as quaint examples of some outlandish and precocious form of art. A very large majority of the poems in this anthology will stand any critical

test for the *genre* they belong to—the lyric—and survive it. In their poetry these aboriginals show neither emotional naivete nor artistic immaturity. They are not the victims of that ornateness and pomposity so many ‘civilized’ poets and poetical schools suffer from nor is their imagery vague. It may be obscure sometimes, the relationship between the emotional statement and the symbol used is often elliptical and may seem extremely tenuous to us, but there never is any Shelleyan cloudiness in the imagery itself.

In folk-poetry the imagery has often a distinctly symbolical function which is perhaps the outcome of its ritualistic origin. As a matter of fact a good deal of this poetry is ritualistic in nature. The extensive use of sexual symbolism in folk-poetry has been discussed by W. G. Archer in *Man in India* and elsewhere and it would be mere impertinence on my part to go over the same ground again. But it shows the aboriginal’s pre-occupation—one can almost call it an obsession—with the vital sexual and communal life. His main interest seems to be in the basic things, perhaps because fortunately he does not know much about the frills that loom so large in ‘civilized’ communities and so frequently take one’s attention off the main design of living.

Some of the recurrent images as well as the rhythms show that these folk-songs borrow largely from conventions and forms in Hindi poetry. In this they are slightly different from the Uraon songs translated so beautifully in W. G. Archer’s *The Blue Grove*. The language is very close to Hindi and culturally these Maikal Hills people have been influenced by the Hindus and so the borrowing of motifs and images is quite natural. But it should not be supposed that the songs are a sort of leaf-drift of Hindi poetry, decadent in their tone. Whatever these people borrow they make their own. The freshness and individuality of tone are remarkable. In the use of metaphor they often show a flair for the startling, with a subtlety and beauty that makes one think of the metaphysical conceit. For instance,

‘The parting of your hair  
Is like a red centipede.’  
‘Like a bat he flew away.’  
‘The peacock dances in your braided hair.’  
‘And the village is bare as a hill.’

There is often a verbal delicacy and imaginative rightness as in,  
‘For Gond girls flicker like lightning.’  
‘Let sleep be spun into you.’  
‘But now stop dancing in my eyes.’

Or describing the effects of a famine:—

‘Under the stone  
The crabs are weeping *dhar dhar*.’

The songs cover an immense variety of themes and range over a very wide field of emotions and moods. The songs seem to be composed round every conceivable subject. There are graver songs like the religious ones harping on the vanity of vanities.

‘What is man’s body? It is a bubble of water  
Broken by the wind.’

There are the rollicking Bhajli and too frank Holi songs where the Rabelaisian hilarity condones the nudity of the theme.

There is an interesting instance of fetishicism in No. 172, and all desire is implicit in

‘How tightly  
Your new jacket  
Fits your lovely body.’

Many of the songs, especially the Dadaria ones, are epigrammatic in form. The epigram is frequently handled with great deftness, and sometimes concentrates into two lines the deeply-felt experience of life.

‘Boy there is no rain and there ‘ll be no rice  
Come let’s go to work in the mine.’

' Tell me now once for all, open your heart to me  
Is there some other man whom you desire ? '  
' You never made a garland of wild berries  
Once love is gone how unhappy you are.'

In contrast there is the mischievous humour of :

' With old men the bazaar is crowded  
For a pice you can get  
A pair of old dears  
And a boy thrown in for luck.'

and the bitter humour of the disillusioned wives gossiping at a well-head (588). There is also the grim humour of No. 600 that reminds one strongly of some ballad motifs.

The place of the riddle in folk-literature is now generally recognized. It may take the form of an initiation test or part of a ritual or just a test of quickness of wit and ingenuity. The desire to mystify by bringing in obscure symbols and elliptical statements is a strong element in the make-up of primitive and adolescent mentality and is sometimes manifest in artists in more advanced communities, too. Browning offers a good instance. Some of these songs are straightforward riddles, the solution very often not being so straightforward at all. In others based upon an emotional theme there is a deliberate attempt to mystify by withholding some important links, it is an attempt at a sort of wit which occurs in other literatures as well. For example,

' The garden fence is very thick  
Don't be afraid, I'll bring your turban hidden in my pot.'

This has been explained by the translators, but many songs remain obscure, and at their best make one think of surrealist poetry. Some of the songs, though, are mere jumbles of images or strings of verses without any pattern, clear or obscure, in them.

The aboriginal poet achieves the peak of his art in the love song, however, for love forms the one golden thread in the fabric of his life which is otherwise woven of the drab threads of toil and hardship. Wine, women and song constitute the trinity that saves him from devastating boredom, because his life is not at all easy and has few other pleasures for him. They keep him decent and make all the difference between him and men in similar economic conditions in civilized communities.

Some of the songs may be mere ingenious exercises in verse like the poems produced in Mashairas and Kavi Sammelans, but most of the love songs express genuine and often spontaneous feelings and the language in its intensity and controlled simplicity shows the effects of great emotional pressure. The themes covered are desire and disillusion, frustration and fulfilment and all those experiences and moods that go with the rather mercurial temperament of these people. The control of the medium and the precision and clarity of language very often achieve results comparable with the best lyric poetry in any language. The translations are so beautiful that one feels like quoting dozens of the songs. I shall, however, give a few.

' Cover me with your cloth  
Alone I die  
On this cold night. '  
' How young I was  
When you took me as yours  
And then you spoilt my life  
Midway in life you have deceived me  
But God will take me  
To the end of the road.'  
' Youth passes quickly, quickly  
But a girl's youth endures  
The shortest time of all.'

Or 152, 278, 284, 285 and many more.



The translators have not only provided a neat setting and commentaries on the songs, but also brought in a large mass of examples of parallel imageries in other languages, that show the extraordinary affinities of literatures in different parts of the world. One of the best tests of good poetry is that it brings to mind similar passages from other great poems, and this is what the songs very often do. No. 288 reminds one of a beautiful passage in *Romeo and Juliet*, and the Gond song :

‘The forest is no more a forest

I will be restless in the village where I found rest till now

But part we must, for our enemy the dawn has come.’  
with a United Provinces song which ends on the line

‘O God let there be no dawn to such a night !’

are so closely akin to the ‘*tantest va alba*’—‘O God, how quick the night and day comes on,’ of Provencal poetry.

‘If I live I will come to meet you

If I die I’ll never see you more’

has the bare simplicity and poignancy of Brutus’ farewell to Cassius in Shakespeare’s play, and there are other songs that in their mischievous gaiety remind one of the mediaeval French :—

‘*Pour quoi me bat mon mari.*’

They achieve perfection so often that one cannot help feeling that there is something in their sensibility which we are sadly lacking in.

The songs have been arranged according to their theme and function and this arrangement brings out another vital fact about these songs of the Maikal Hills. To these people the song is a function of life and is closely related to all that is most important and essential in it. Though intensely individual in tone it is primarily a communal and social activity and the songs range in quality and importance according to the value of what they are related to and express. The marriage rituals and the accompanying songs, for instance, make a perfect symphony. The aboriginal is thus achieving a harmony and a poise in his different activities which are denied to individuals belonging to more prosaic societies and he has a sense of comparative values that have become completely chaotic in more sophisticated civilizations.

One cannot sufficiently thank the translators for what they have done for us, for the anthology gives us an insight into aboriginal life which no monograph could have done. Anybody with imagination will realize how very cruel and shortsighted will be any thoroughgoing ‘reforms’ of these happy people who are in many ways better than their so-called reformers. Who steals their songs steals all that makes life beautiful for them and turns it into that silly and tragic travesty of civilization one comes across in Africa and parts of India.

FAZLUR RAHMAN

# MAN IN INDIA

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[ No. 2

## THE PROBLEM OF MEGALITHIC CULTURES IN MIDDLE INDIA

By

CHRISTOPH VON FÜRER-HAIMENDORF

VERRIER ELWIN'S study, *Funerary Customs in Bastar State*, which fills the greater part of this issue of *Man in India*, is perhaps the fullest existing account of the funeral rites and eschatological beliefs of any group of aboriginal races in Peninsular India. But it is more than that; it opens up a new vista on one of the most intriguing problems of Indian ethnology: the problem of megalithic monuments erected in honour of the dead. Indeed no reader familiar with the literature on the megalithic cultures of Southern Asia can fail to be struck by the many close parallels which link the megalithic ritual of the Gond tribes of Bastar with that of the Austroasiatic peoples of Orissa and Chota Nagpur, of the Khasis and Nagas of Assam, and even with the highly developed megalithic cultures of Indonesia and the South Seas.

Long before anthropologists had discovered any of the crude stone monuments set up by primitive races of to-day, the megalithic graves and stone alignments of Western Europe had been the subject of speculation by prehistorians, who without any reference to ethnological material soon came to the more or less unanimous opinion that the majority of these colossal stone monuments of past times were in some way connected with a cult of the dead. With the extension of the field of archaeological research megalithic remains became known from North Africa and Western Asia, and already Fergusson described a good many stone monuments of similar type from India. But it was only with the work of P. R. T. Gurdon, T. C. Hodson, J. H. Hutton and J. P. Mills in Assam that the importance of *living* megalithic cultures in India was fully recognized. Their discoveries were paralleled by similar finds in Formosa, the Philippines, Indonesia and parts of Oceania, and in 1928 R. von Heine Geldern drew a picture of a megalithic culture spreading over large parts of Southeastern Asia and far into the Pacific, and connected, in some as yet doubtful way, with the prehistoric megaliths of Europe<sup>1</sup>. His hypothesis was subsequently tested and elaborated in regard to Indonesia and Oceania<sup>2</sup>.

1. 'Die Megalithen Südasiens und ihre Bedeutung für die Klärung der Megalithenfrage in Europa und Polynesien', *Anthropos*, Vol. XXIII, 1928, pp. 276-315.

2. Cf. P. Vroklage, 'Das Schiff in den Megalithkulturen Südasiens und der Südsee', *Anthropos*, Vol. XXXI (1936), 712-757.

and results of subsequent field-work in various areas seem to confirm his main assumption. More and more evidence accumulated for the theory that the bearers of megalithic culture in the widely scattered islands of Indonesia were the folks responsible also for the spread of the Austronesian languages and of a distinctive and highly developed neolithic industry

What then are the characteristic features of the megalithic ritual and its spiritual foundations, so deeply rooted in cultures thousands of miles apart? Its material manifestations are the setting up of menhirs, dolmens, stone seats and stone circles as well as of forked wooden posts, both as memorials for the dead and as tallies of Feasts of Merit; the sacrifice of oxen or buffaloes connected with the erection of such monuments; and sometimes the use of crude stone for other monumental purposes, such as paved avenues, staircases, bridges, and the lining of wells and tanks; its driving force is the belief in an intimate relation between the living and the dead, and particularly in the powerful influence which the departed exert on the fertility of man and crops, and the conviction that the beneficial 'virtue' of a deceased kinsman can be concentrated in a stone, which is set up in his honour and becomes henceforth his symbol and seat. Side by side with these ideas runs frequently the conception that social 'merit' can be gained by the performance of certain feasts which culminate in the erection of stone monuments or wooden memorial posts and that this merit lends not only prestige in this life but guarantees a happier fate in the world hereafter. Such stones become the mystical receptacle of a man's 'virtue,' the concentration of which in a monument increases his wealth and the fertility of his crops; it seems almost as if in analogy to the beneficial influence exerted by the spirits of the dead, the soul-substance of exceptionally wealthy men is attributed with a similar magical power provided it is furnished with a stone monument as vehicle and focal point.<sup>2</sup>

The megalithic complex found in Assam and many other parts of Southeastern Asia appeared thus not as an accidental aggregation of various culture elements, but as a well co-ordinated system of customs and beliefs, a philosophy of life and nature. It was obviously of considerable interest whether similar ideas were connected with the megalithic monuments of other parts of India. But detailed information about the exact circumstances of their

1. Cf. R. von Heine-Geldern, 'Urheimat und früheste Wanderungen der Austronesier', *Anthropos*, XXVII, (1932), pp. 543-619; and 'L'art préboudhique de la Chine et de l'Asie du sud-est et son influence en Océanie', *Revue des Arts Asiatiques*, Vol. XI, 4, (1937), pp. 177, 178.

2. For fuller details on the ideas underlying megalithic ritual in Assam see also: J. H. Hutton, 'The Meaning and Method of the Erection of Monoliths by the Naga Tribes', *J. R. A. I.* Vol. LII (1922); and 'The Use of Stone in the Naga Hills', *J. R. A. I.* Vol. LVI (1922); C. v. Fürer-Haimendorf, *The Naked Nagas*, (London 1939); and 'The Megalithic Culture of the Naga Tribes of Assam', *Research and Progress* Vol. V (1939), pp. 95-100.

erection have long been wanting, and it is only in very recent years that the connection between the megalithic cultures of Assam and those of Peninsular India is gradually taking shape. In my article 'Megalithic Ritual among the Gadabas and Bondos of Orissa.'<sup>1</sup> I have shown that the highly developed megalithic culture of these tribes of Orissa is based on the same fundamental ideas as that of the Assam hill-tribes, and the numerous parallels in the details of ritual and type of monuments leave indeed no doubt that here we have a branch of the great megalithic civilization which is so widely distributed over Southeastern Asia. Both Gadabas and Bondos speak Austroasiatic tongues and since all ethnological and archaeological evidence points to the fact that folks of Austroasiatic languages entered India from the east, these affinities to an eastern culture-complex are not very surprising.

But how can we explain that megalithic customs very similar both to those of the Gadabas and Bondos and those of the Nagas prevail among the Gond tribes of Bastar, and that in this area we find even certain elements occurring in Assam but absent in Orissa?

Let us see how far these parallels go. Most of the Bastar Gonds—Hill Marias, Bison-horn Marias, Dorlas and Murias—erect menhirs (*uraskal*) and sometimes also dolmens (*danyakal*) as memorials to the dead (XII)<sup>2</sup>, and the erection is usually accompanied by a feast and the sacrifice of a cow or bullock (XV). This corresponds closely to the custom of the Gadabas, the Khasis and the Western Angami Nagas, and here as there is the idea that the dead honoured by a memorial stone can render active help to their living kinsmen. The ritual accompanying the transport of a menhir provides another parallel to Naga custom. When the Angamis drag a menhir to the place of erection, a prominent warrior in full ceremonial dress stands on it; Elwin mentions (XV) that a relative of the deceased climbs on to the stone with a drum and sitting or standing on it drums while the men carry the stone to its destination.

A characteristic feature of megalithic cultures in Assam as well as in Indonesia, Oceania and certain parts of Africa, is the interchangeability of menhir and forked wooden post of Y-shape.<sup>3</sup> Such forked posts can take the place of menhirs and are erected with similar ceremonies almost invariably connected with the

1. *J. R. A. S. Beng.*, Vol. IX (1943,) pp. 149-178.

2. A good account of these megalithic monuments is contained in W. V. Grigson's *The Maria Gonds of Bastar* (London, 1938), but for the sake of convenience, I will refer here only to the following study by Verrier Elwin; the Roman figures given in brackets indicate the respective chapters.

3. Cf. C. v. Füller-Haimendorf, *The Megalithic Culture of Assam*, published as an Appendix to F. M. Schnitzger's *Forgotten Kingdoms in Sumatra* (Leyden 1939), pp. 218 f.

sacrifice of an ox, buffalo or bison.<sup>1</sup> An identical custom is found in Bastar (XII) and Elwin mentions that 'in any case, where a forked stick takes the place of the menhir, the fork is intended as a holder over which the tail of the cow should be hung.' The huge forked posts of the Nagas, some as much as fifteen feet high, do not have this purpose, but on a recent tour in the Balipara Frontier Tract I saw Daffas fastening to a forked post the tail of a mithan sacrificed on the occasion of a peace treaty. It is significant that forked posts, whose erection entails less effort than the quarrying or dragging of menhirs, are sometimes retained where the other elements of a megalithic culture have largely decayed. Thus the Koyas of Hyderabad put up miniature forked posts on graves during the memorial feasts and the Raj Gonds of Hyderabad erect a temporary forked post on the place where the memorial feast (*pitre*) is performed; as in Bastar the tails of the sacrificial cows are invariably tied to these posts. Neither Gadabas nor Bondos set up forked posts, and it thus seems these Y-posts constitute a link between Gonds and Nagas not shared by the hill tribes of Orissa.

Menhirs should, among the Bastar Gonds, only be set up on the hereditary clan-land of the deceased (XIII), and this tallies with the Nagas' custom of erecting memorial monuments in or close to a man's ancestral village, attachment to the village-sites, which remain the same through the centuries, being here much stronger than among the unsteady Gonds. Similarly the Gadabas erect their memorial menhirs on the *sodor*, the stone-sitting-place in the centre of the village. A favourite place for memorial pillars of wood—and indeed also for menhirs—is the side of a 'road or path that is constantly used by the people' (XIX), and this reminds us again of the Naga Hills where 'the stones stand near the paths so that they may shed their virtue on the passing villagers and increase their fertility and the fertility of their crops.'<sup>2</sup>

But parallels are not confined to the outward appearance and position of monuments and the circumstances of their erection; there is an essential identity of beliefs surrounding the megalithic monuments and memorial posts. Elwin describes (XX) how the Murias believe that the dead man's soul comes into the stone or pillar, selected for his memorial, and guides those carrying it to a place agreeable to the soul. This belief that the soul or part of the soul-substance of a man attaches itself to the stone is very common; the Angami Nagas see in the menhir a vehicle of 'virtue' which, emanating from a person and adhering to the stone, benefits his fellow-villagers and the fertility of the crops. The Bondos consider the dolmen memorial as the seat of the deceased and salute

1. For illustrations of such Y-posts set up as memorials to the dead see C. v. Fürer-Haimendorf, 'Through the Unexplored Mountains of the Assam-Burma Border,' *The Geographical Journal*, Vol. XCI (1938), facing p. 210.

2. *The Naked Nagas*, p. 26.

it when passing, and the Kolams, as I had recently the opportunity of observing, embrace the newly erected memorial post or stone like a person.

Verrier Elwin has made it very clear that the Gonds of Bastar imagine the departed as capable of both beneficial and harmful intervention in human affairs (V), and this belief in the unity of the dead and the living is indeed one of the cardinal features of megalithic religion. Stone and wooden monuments are but the focal points of a constant communion across the threshold of death, and it is perhaps this dominant idea of the immortality of man and the undestructible bonds between those once united through ties of blood or marriage, which gave the megalithic *Weltanschauung*, as we may well call this philosophy, an appeal powerful enough to carry it across continents and oceans.<sup>1</sup>

Among some Nagas the characters of menhirs as memorials for the dead is eclipsed by their function as monuments in honour of the living erected in the course of elaborate Feasts of Merit. But the difference is more apparent than real; the menhir set up by a rich man in his lifetime becomes his memorial after his death. The Gonds of Bastar do not seem to have the custom of erecting monuments for any living man, but in the neighbouring Malkanagiri Taluq of Orissa I was told that Bison-horn Marias sometimes erected menhirs for men who had gone to work in the tea-gardens of Assam. Elwin mentions that among the Bison-horn Marias of Bastar some men, anxious for their future fame, will prepare a stone to be set up in their memory after their death (XIV), and it is not improbable that the erection of monuments by the living in order to raise their own prestige may have grown out of some such practice. Though no doubt the setting up of an imposing memorial pillar lends local prestige not only to the dead, but also to his kinsmen who bear the expense, the idea of true Feasts of Merit is not found in Bastar, and is only faintly expressed among the Gadabas in the obligatory expenditure of wealth and the display of lavish hospitality during the *Gota mela* feasts.<sup>2</sup> Indeed the absence of Feasts of Merit in Peninsular India is one of the main points of difference between megalithic cultures there and in Further India.<sup>3</sup>

1. It is impossible to elaborate in this context the distribution of megalithic culture outside India, but I may refer the reader to J. Layard's *Stone Men of Malekula* (London, 1942), which describes the megalithic ritual of the New Hebrides, and to Ralph Linton's *The Tanala. A Hill Tribe of Madagascar* (Anthropological Series XXII. Field Museum of Natural History, Chicago, 1930) which offers close parallels to the megalithic ritual of the Angamis and Khasis.

2. Cf. 'Megalithic Ritual among the Gadabas and Bondos of Orissa', loc. cit., pp. 152-158.

3. But Feasts of Merit resembling even in certain details those of the Angami Nagas occur among the Kafirs of Nuristan; cf. Sir George Scott Robertson, *The Kafir of the Hindu Kush*, (London, 1886).

This comparison between the stone monuments of Bastar and Assam, two areas of flourishing megalithic culture now well documented, should not lead to the belief that elsewhere in India megalithic ritual has completely decayed. The numerous stone monuments, including menhirs, dolmens and stone-circles, erected by Gadabas and Bondos have already been mentioned. Equally well developed, though apparently of a slightly different character, are the megalithic elements among the Mundas of Chota Nagpur; here large stone slabs (*sasandiri*) cover certain graves and dolmen-like *sasandiri* supported by smaller stones serve as family burial places where parts of the bones of the family members are buried in the course of a second funeral; menhirs (*biddiri*) are moreover set up as memorials to the dead, either near the *sasandiri*, the grave or anywhere along the village-roads.<sup>1</sup> Besides the *sasan*, the megalithic burial place, there is moreover on the public meeting places of many Munda villages a sitting platform composed of large stone-slabs, obviously comparable to the *sodor* of the Gadabas.<sup>2</sup> The Hos and other Munda-speaking tribes of Chota Nagpur have megalithic burial grounds of almost identical form.

Megalithic elements among the Korkus, the westernmost of the tribes with Austroasiatic languages, have recently been investigated by W. Koppers.<sup>3</sup> From his accounts and earlier literature on the tribe it appears that the square wooden posts with pointed or rounded top (*munda*), often elaborately carved, which the Korkus set up in the course of memorial feasts in honour of deceased relatives belong to the same category as the *biddiri* stones of the Mundas, and the menhirs and memorial pillars of the Bastar Gonds. They have no connection with the grave, and only rarely do flat stones or pillars of stone take their place. Thus we see here a branch of a megalithic culture where stone has been almost completely replaced by wood. Symptomatic of the dilution of megalithic ritual is also the omission of the cow-sacrifice, elsewhere accompanying the erection of memorial posts and stones.

Wooden posts, also called *munda* and closely resembling some Korku memorial posts except for their greater simplicity, are erected by the Raj Gonds of Hyderabad in the name of individual dead. The animal whose blood must redden the post is a goat, although cows are sacrificed in the course of the great memorial feasts (*pitre*). It seems indeed that among these Gonds of the hill-tracts between the Godavari and the Penganga, two different

1. J. Hoffmann, *Encyclopaedia Mundarica* (Patna, 1930 seq.), Vol. II, pp. 531-536; Vol. IX, pp. 2797, 2798.

2. Sarat Chandra Roy, *The Mundas and their Country* (Calcutta, 1912), pp. 387, 388, 465.

3. 'Monuments to the Dead of the Bhils and other Primitive Tribes in Central India,' *Annali Lateranensi*, Vol. VI, 1942, pp. 165-183; see also 'The Mundas and the Sidoli Feast of the Korkoos', *New Review* (Calcutta 1939), pp. 201-212.

cults of the dead, each bearing traces of megalithic influence, have met and dove-tailed. For the erection of such a *munda*, a square pointed post of teak-wood, close to the place where the body was burnt is quite independent of the memorial feast held in the village; the latter includes the sacrifice of a cow, whose tail is tied to a rough forked post, uprooted and discarded on the next day. Between these two observances for the benefit of the dead there is no connection, the sequence is optional and either both or only one of them may be performed for any individual deceased. While the memorial feast with cow-sacrifice points to a connection with the Bastar Gonds, the custom of erecting *munda* may be due to a different influence, traceable perhaps to the same source as that of the Korkus' *munda* posts.

The monuments to the dead of the Bhils<sup>1</sup> seem at first sight to fall into the same order as the *munda* of the Korkus. The material is either stone or wood, but more frequent are flat memorial stones with a man on horseback carved in relief. The monuments stand usually in groups facing eastwards, but never near the actual grave or burning place. Only prominent persons are honoured by the erection of such a memorial, but the accompanying ceremonial is, compared to that of Korkus and Gonds, extremely poor, and Koppers comes to the conclusion that the Bhils were originally a non-megalithic people, and 'that in their present form the Bhil monuments show the influence of higher civilizations of northern and northwestern neighbours, the Rajputs and Gujars to whom they must ultimately be traced back.'<sup>2</sup> They are indeed not 'crude stone-monuments' of the megalithic type, but must be viewed against the background of other forms of Indian tombstones and cenotaphs.

We may now turn to our main problem, the origin and affinities of megalithic culture in Middle India. The close parallels between the megalithic ritual of the Bastar Gonds, the Austroasiatic hill-tribes of Orissa and Chota Nagpur, and the Nagas and Khasis are evidence for a genetic connection between all these manifestations of megalithic culture. No anthropologist familiar with the Indian scene, however sceptical of 'diffusion,' will seriously contest this. But cultural affinities allow of various interpretations, and the similarity of individual elements and indeed of the whole cultural atmosphere among these tribes are in themselves no conclusive indication of the direction in which megalithic culture spread over the vast area between the Naga Hills and the Deccan. A solution of this question can only be reached by a correlation of ethnological, linguistic and archaeological evidence.

Ethnologically it is important that this megalithic culture of the Southeast Asiatic type, as we may conveniently call it, is

1. Cf. Koppers, op. cit., pp. 141-165.

2. op cit., p. 155.



mainly concentrated among tribes of well developed agricultural civilizations, characterized by the use of hoes, shifting-cultivation on hill-fields and sometimes also permanent cultivation on irrigated terraces,<sup>1</sup> and the keeping of cattle for slaughter, but not for use in the yoke or for milking. It is not found in the more primitive strata of Indian aboriginal cultures: neither the food-gatherers and hunters, such as the Chenchus and the jungle tribes of the Southwest, nor the early digging-stick cultivators, such as Hill Reddis and Baigas, show any traces of megalithic ritual. The higher agricultural civilizations, which are not confined to India but occur in strikingly similar forms on Formosa, the Philippines, and many of the islands of the Malayan Archipelago belong in their whole level of development to neolithic times, and we must therefore look for a neolithic culture which can be responsible for the spread of megalithic ritual. But which neolithic culture has a corresponding distribution over parts of Peninsular India, Further India and Indonesia? Only two seem to come at all into question: the culture characterized by the shouldered adze, and that of the highly finished celt with quadrangular section.<sup>2</sup> In all our theories regarding the prehistory of Peninsular India we are continuously handicapped by the paucity of neolithic finds and systematic excavations of neolithic sites, but material from Further India, Indonesia and the Pacific suggests that there has been an amalgamation of these two industries which occurred probably on the Asiatic mainland and resulted in the polished shouldered adze with quadrangular section. Specimens of this combined type are in my collection from the Naga Hills<sup>3</sup> and have been found as far south as the Godavari.<sup>4</sup> I agree with Heine-Geldern in considering it therefore highly probable that this advanced neolithic culture is due to an impact of the late neolithic *Vierkantbeil* culture on the older shouldered adze industry. Now there can be no doubt that the former had its origin and main distribution in the east and exerted only a limited influence on Peninsular India<sup>5</sup> while sweeping in a stream of unprecedented force through Further India, from island to island of the Malayan Archipelago and far into the Pacific world.

The coincidence of the distribution of the shouldered adze with that of the Austroasiatic languages has long been noticed and most ethnologists agree on a connection between the Austroasiatic people and the makers of the shouldered celts. But the

1. Although most Bastar Gonds, Gadabas, Bondos and Mundas to-day use also the plough, this is obviously a fairly recent innovation.

2. The *Vierkantbeil* of Heine-Geldern's terminology.

3. In the Museum für Völkerkunde of Vienna.

4. L. A. Cammide and M. C. Burkitt, 'Fresh Light on the Stone Ages in Southeast India,' *Antiquity*, Vol. IV (1930), p 338, Plate VI.

5. In the Santal Parganas I have recently seen polished neolithic celts with quadrangular section which had been found on the surface of hillsides.

stratigraphic position of the shouldered celt industry on Indian soil is as yet inadequately known, and we reach much firmer ground in the correlation of the culture of the late neolithic celt with quadrangular section (*Vierkantbeil*) with the speakers of Austronesian languages. Heine-Geldern's theory appears in this respect unassailable. But if the *Vierkantbeil* culture influenced the older shouldered adze industry, we must also assume that the Austronesian folks imparted some of their culture to the peoples with Austroasiatic languages, and there is good reason to believe that the resultant mixed culture has spread westwards into Middle and Peninsular India. The ethnological data lends strong support to this hypothesis, for the culture of the Gadabas and Murias contains elements with clearly Austronesian associations, elements well known not only from Assam but from many parts of the Austronesian sphere.<sup>1</sup>

What bearing has this on the megalithic problem? It speaks in favour of the theory that the megalithic culture of the Southeast Asiatic type which still flourishes among Gadabas, Bondos and Bastar Gonds, reached Peninsular India in late neolithic times and from an eastern direction. Its centre of diffusion—though not necessarily origin—lay somewhere in Eastern Assam, North Burma or Southwest China, and a far stronger branch stretched southwards and southeastwards into Indonesia and Oceania. The peoples with Austronesian languages were certainly closely associated with this culture.

An earlier wave of Austroasiatic culture, untouched by Austronesian influence, is still largely hypothetical and will probably remain so until we know more about India's neolithic age. I am not competent to enter the linguistic controversy over the nature and affinities of the Munda languages and their position vis-à-vis the eastern Austroasiatic languages, but from an ethnological point of view it would seem that such an older Austroasiatic culture, perhaps connected with the rough shouldered adze, may be correlated with certain tribes distinctly more primitive in economic development than the representatives of the full-blown Austronesian culture and yet sharing many common traits. I am thinking of the Konyaks in the Naga Hills, the Bondos in Orissa, and—with certain reservations—the Hill Marias in Bastar. The Konyaks are obviously a much older element than the Angami Nagas; they have no terrace-cultivation, favour millet and taro rather than rice, pigs rather than horned cattle, and have a far less developed megalithic culture, the few

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1. The objection may here be raised that the Nagas speak neither Austroasiatic nor Austronesian, but Tibeto-Burman languages. Their cultural and racial affinities make it clear, however, that originally they did not belong to the Tibeto-Burman group, but are closely akin to the Austroasiatic-speaking Was of Burma and the Austronesian-speaking hill-tribes of the Philippine Islands.

existing menhirs being connected with head-hunting and not with memorial feasts. The Bondos, who with the shaved heads and the peculiar dress of their women remind one so forcibly of Konyaks, seem to stand to the Gadabas and perhaps also the Saoras in a position resembling that of the Konyaks vis-à-vis the Angamis. Rice-cultivation on irrigated terrace-fields is comparatively unimportant and probably of fairly recent introduction, and they rely mainly on the cultivation of small millets on hill-fields, which they cultivate with shouldered iron hoes very similar to those of the Khasis and the Yimsungr Nagas; here too the pig is the favourite sacrificial animal and their menhirs and stone circles are unconnected with the cult of the dead, in whose honour they erect small dolmens. Perhaps the relation Hill Marias—Murias may be likened to that Konyaks—Angamis and Bondos—Gadabas, but having no personal experience of Bastar I would not like to strain this point. But the Hill Marias are no doubt far more primitive than the other Bastar Gonds; their staple food is millet grown on hill-fields and not rice, and pigs seem more important than cattle. Yet in their megalithic ritual they conform to the fully developed Southeast Asiatic type.

In a recent article.<sup>1</sup> I suggested that the essential elements of the megalithic ritual occurring in similar form in such widely separated areas as Assam, Orissa and the islands of Nias, Luzon, Flores, Ambon and Ceram, 'must have already been developed before the beginning of the great Austronesian migration and the movement of the Austroasiatic races westwards into Peninsular India.' This may perhaps give rise to a misunderstanding; I do by no means believe that all populations now speaking Austroasiatic languages immigrated into India from the east; many tribes such as the Dires of Orissa and the Birhors of Bihar lived here probably long before Austroasiatic languages were spoken in India or elsewhere; nor do I suggest that the Austroasiatic languages reached India from the east as a finished product. Ethnologically I see no difficulties standing in the way of the view that the Munda languages are a mixture between elements of northwestern affinities<sup>2</sup> and tongues akin to the Austroasiatic and Austronesian languages of Further India.

Here, where we are only concerned with the megalithic complex; these far-reaching problems cannot be discussed, but I may mention that W. Koppers, without having seen my article on Gadabas

<sup>1</sup> J. R. A. S. Beng., Vol. IX (1943), p. 177.

<sup>2</sup> J. H. Hutton favours the theory that the Munda languages reached India from the northwest (*Census of India*, 1931, Vol. I, Part I. p. 359). W. de Hevesy traced affinities between Munda and Ugro-Finnish languages, 'Ob-Ougriens de Sibirie et Munda de l'Inde', *L'Anthropologie*, 46, 1936. p. 613 seq., and J. Lercher has recently pointed to similarities between Korku and Ancient Hebrew, 'Korku: an East-West Link,' *New Review* (Calcutta, 1943), pp. 149-157.)

and Bondos or knowing anything of my discovery of a megalithic culture among these tribes, has come independently to a very similar view in regard to the rôle of the Austronesians. After stating that it would be premature to decide whether the 'Austroasiatics or the Dravidians must be regarded as the original exponents of megalithic culture,' he suggests 'that these two groups may, in ancient times, have been influenced from a third side. Other cultural and racial groups might well come into question as the original bearers of the megalithic tradition.' And he concludes: "We shall content ourselves with the suggestion that the immigration waves of Austronesian peoples which once passed over Further India may possibly represent that third element by which the aboriginals of Central India were touched and influenced."<sup>1</sup>

But I believe we can go further than W. Koppers, and definitely exclude the people with Dravidian languages as possible representatives of the megalithic culture of Asiatic type.<sup>2</sup> The fact that the greater part of Gonds speak Gondi, a Dravidian tongue, proves in no way their Dravidian origin. It is indeed highly improbable that any of the aboriginal tribes with Dravidian languages, be they Chenchus, Kolams, Gonds or Oraons, should have a genetic connection with the progressive races of Indid type which created the historical Dravidian civilization. The Gonds are just as little Dravidians as the Bhils or Baigas are Aryans, though one element in the Raj Gonds is probably responsible for the adoption of Dravidian language and the spread of certain features of Dravidian culture. But I fully agree with J. H. Hutton's theory of a large-scale Dravidianization of aboriginal tribes which occurred partly previous and partly parallel to the Aryanization of which we are still witnesses.<sup>3</sup> But if the Gonds did not always speak Dravidian languages, what were then their original tongues? A definite answer to this question cannot yet be given and I think it quite possible that some of the tribes now known as Gonds, but widely differing in general culture, spoke originally different languages. But as far as the Murias and probably also the Marias are concerned, all evidence points to their intimate affinity with the nearby Gadabas of Orissa and it is very probable that they spoke Austroasiatic dialects before they were subject to the same process of Dravidianization which, according to Hutton, replaced the old Austroasiatic tongue of the Oraons by a Dravidian dialect akin to Gondi and Kolami. The boys' and girls' dormitories, the type of dress and ornaments, the dances and the highly developed artistic sense of the Ghotul Murias, and last not least, their megalithic ritual and eschatological beliefs, all point to the Austroasiatic-Austronesian sphere and not to the

1. *Monuments to the Dead of the Bhils*, loc. cit., pp. 199-200.

2. But I would not commit myself to the same view in regard to the prehistoric megalithic culture of Southern and Western India.

3. Cf. *Census of India*, 1931, Vol. I, Part I, p. 358.

Dravidian south.

There remains one problem upon which I have already touched in my study of the megalithic cultures of Orissa : the question of the relations of the megalithic culture of Southeast Asiatic type to the prehistoric megalithic monuments of Southern India. The geographic spheres of both types touch and even overlap in the Deccan as well as in the Central Provinces, and two years ago I watched the piquant spectacle of Koyas being employed in the excavation of megalithic graves of an unknown race which long before them must have inhabited the fertile banks of the Godavari. But in outward appearance there is a great difference between these prehistoric dolmen graves, stone circles and eormous stone alignments, and the megalithic monuments of the living aboriginal races. I have seen the monuments of the Nagas and Khasis, of Gadabas, Bondos and Gonds and I have seen many of the prehistoric dolmens and cromlechs of Hyderabad, but was never struck by any close resemblance. This alone would, of course, not prove the absence of a genetic connection. More important are the differences in function and meaning of the monuments. The megaliths of the tribal folks of to-day are, with comparatively few exceptions, memorials unconnected with graves or burning grounds. Those of prehistoric times are in the majority graves or closely associated with graves : interred stone-cists surrounded by a stone circle and often covered by a huge cap-stone or a tumulus, cromlechs or dolmens usually, though not always, built over a grave, and menhirs standing at no great distance from grave-circles. Not noticeably or necessarily linked with graves are the large alignments of unshaped, often almost round, stone-blocks, covering with their numerous, well spaced-out rows considerable ground, but these too seem to have no exact counterpart in present-day megalithic cultures. Even more important are chronological considerations. The dolmen graves of Southern India and the Deccan do not seem to be older than the early Iron Age, while the great migrations of the Austronesians occurred in neolithic times, and the megalithic culture of Southeast Asia, developed before the beginning of these migrations, belongs definitely to the late Stone Age.

There is fairly general agreement that the megalithic tombs of Southern India are in some way connected with the megalithic cultures of the Mediterranean countries and Western Asia, and one of the main proofs is seen in the custom of leaving open one end of the cist or breaking a hole at the rim of the cap-stone, the so-called 'soul hole,' believed to serve as an escape to the soul of the deceased.<sup>1</sup> This practice, a characteristic feature of the

<sup>1</sup> Cf. A. Serner, *The "Dyss" Burial and Beliefs about the Dead during the Stone Age with special regard to South Scandinavia. An Archaeological and Historico-Religious Research*, (Lund 1938), p. 234 seq. G. Wilke, *Südwest europäische Megalithkulturen und ihre Beziehungen Zum Orient*. (Würzburg 1902), p. 17.

megalithic tombs of the Mediterranean sphere and Southern India does not occur among any of the tribes of Middle India who bury their dead in megalithic graves, such as the Mundas and Hos.

Walter Ruben, who deals with the problem of megaliths in his recent study on the Asurs, the iron workers of Chota Nagpur,<sup>1</sup> inclines to the view that the custom of constructing megalithic tombs reached India by way of Palestine and Persia in the early Iron Age, and that this megalithic culture split in Northern India, one branch moving southwards and the other eastwards as far as Chota Nagpur. He thus believes that the ancient Asur tombs and the megalithic culture of the Mundas have a western origin and spread from there during the Iron Age further eastwards to Assam. I have already mentioned<sup>2</sup> why in my opinion this hypothesis, put forward tentatively as one of several possibilities, is in this extreme form untenable. It accounts neither for the great difference in the types of monuments found in Southern and Western India and in the sphere of the Southeast Asiatic complex, nor does it explain how the rich megalithic ritual of the Assam tribes could have been evolved out of the few elements received by the Mundas from the west. Ruben could not know of the megalithic ritual of the Gadabas and Bondos, and wrote his study before Grigson's *The Maria Gonds of Bastar* had been published; he consequently did not realize how many features of megalithic culture, absent in Southern and Western India, occurred both in Middle India and in Assam. But there may yet be an important element of truth in Ruben's hypothesis. It is improbable that a civilization as widespread and dynamic as that responsible for the South Indian dolmen graves of the early Iron-Age, should have had no influence on the aboriginal populations with which it must have come in touch<sup>3</sup> and the dolmen-graves of the Mundas and Hos, which have no exact parallels in Assam and the Austronesian sphere, may indeed be the result of an ancient contact between Austroasiatic populations and the materially more advanced people of that powerful civilization. The fact that all Asur and Munda graves hitherto opened contain iron implements seem to support the hypothesis, but we cannot overlook the fact that in an area with a living megalithic culture dolmen-graves of neolithic times, should they ever have existed, must have had a poor chance of remaining intact. For once no longer clearly recognizable as cap-stones of graves, the stone slabs from old burials are likely to be used again for building new dolmens, and thus all the more easily noticeable traces of neolithic burials may have been destroyed by the builders' own descendants.

1. *Eisenschmiede und Dämonen in Indien, Internationales Archiv für Ethnographie*, Band XXXVII, Supplement, Leiden 1939.

2. *J. R. A. S. Beng.* Vol. IX. (1943) p. 178.

3. Megalithic customs still persisting among such tribes as the Kurubas of North Arcot and the Tottiyans of Madura District are very likely remnants of that civilization.

Yet I would go even a step further and concede to Ruben that some echo of this Western megalithic culture may have reached the Khasis of Assam and given rise to the peculiar custom of collecting periodically the bones of all clan-members and depositing them in a free-standing cist, as big as a small house, built of enormous single slabs. Such bone-repositories are not found among the Nagas,<sup>1</sup> but have obvious affinities with the common family graves of the Mundas and ancient Asurs; and since the history of peoples and cultures runs usually not along single and easily disentangleable lines, the spread of such a megalithic element from west to east, perhaps many hundred years after the great megalithic migrations from east to west, cannot be regarded as *a priori* impossible.

The final question, whether the megalithic cultures which reached India from east and west, the former in neolithic times and the latter in the early Iron-Age, have had their origin in a common source outside Southern Asia, is not ripe for an answer; but the existence of megalithic remains in the Altai region and in Tibet<sup>2</sup> seems to suggest the possibility that future research may yet uncover a link between the Mediterranean and European megaliths of the neolithic age and the still flourishing megalithic cultures of Southeastern Asia and Middle India.

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1. They may, however, be connected with the Konyak Naga custom of removing the skull from the burial platform and depositing it in a sandstone urn; the skull-urns of all members of a clan within a village are kept in the same place, and the Khasi bone-depository may have developed from such a root without any outside influence.

2 To Mr. Svetoslav Roerich I owe the information that menhirs, megalithic alignments and stone circles were found in Inner Tibet by his brother George N. Roerich; many of the menhirs are nearly submerged in the sand and the local population knows nothing about the meaning or the builders of these megalithic monuments. Cf. also George N. Roerich, *The Epic of King Kesar of Ling*, *J. R. A. S. Beng.*, Vol. VIII (1942), Plate 5.

# FUNERARY CUSTOMS IN BASTAR STATE

BY VERRIER ELWIN

## I INTRODUCTION

THIS paper will attempt to give some account of the cult of the dead, funerary rites and memorial monuments of the main groups of aboriginals in Bastar State.

I will confine myself to a consideration of three tribes—the Hill Maria, who live in the recesses of the Abujhmar Mountains; the Bison-horn Maria of the Dantewara, Konta and Bijapur Tahsils and the Sukma Zamindari; and two classes of Muria—the Jhoria Muria, who live in the Abujhmar foothills and the north-central plateau and the Ghotul Muria, who are distributed over the north of the State in the Narayanpur and Kondagaon Tahsils.<sup>1</sup>

I have used these names, for they have been popularized by Grigson in his admirable and authoritative work *The Maria Gonds of Bastar*<sup>2</sup>. They are not, however, really satisfactory for, as Grigson says, "descriptive as they may be, they are not the names used by the tribes themselves or by the local inhabitants of Bastar. Most of the Muria now call themselves Muria; many Muria call themselves Gond; but all call themselves by one name, Koitur—a word which indicates their fundamental unity and which must be my excuse for describing the death customs of three different tribes in a single paper.

It is impossible to live for long in Bastar without becoming more and more convinced of the underlying oneness of its people. Anthropometric measurements on a large scale have not yet been made but those that have been taken suggest that there has been in any case considerable mixture. I believe myself that all these tribes were originally one tribe and that their divergencies of culture have arisen as a result of their geographical dispersion.

All these tribesmen lived till recently by axe-cultivation. Now, as a result of the settlement of the State and the reservation of large tracts of forest, many of them are taking to ordinary plough-agriculture. The Hill Maria, however, retain almost exclusively their axe-cultivation and Bison-horn Maria and Muria maintain it side by side with the use of cattle.

The State has now for many years allowed its aboriginal population great freedom and has protected it from undue interference. The ceremonial hunt before the monsoons continues. Fishing, falconry cock-fighting occupy the younger men and women. Maria and Muria still go out to gather the fruits of the earth without hindrance. The sago and toddy palms flourish and are untaxed, providing a ready source of refreshment. The *mahua* tree (*Bassia latifolia*, Roxb.) provides food and oil, though the people are not now allowed to distil spirit from its flowers. On the other hand, they are permitted to make the highly intoxicating rice-beer known as *lānda*. Free and happy, Maria and Muria live a life close to the earth and simple as nature. Their tribal organization, their religion, their moral and social customs are still in a high state of preservation and in result the people flourish.

The most notable feature of Bison-horn Maria culture is the dancing which has given the tribe its name. The people have a magnificent marriage-dance when the men wear head-dresses made of bison horns. The life of the Jhoria and Ghotul Muria centres round the *ghotul* or village dormitory. The boy and girl members of the *ghotul* (who are called *cheli* and *motiari* respectively) have many and varied social duties at festivals, marriages, and even funerals. They live together in complex and intimate relationships from the age of seven to seventeen. The *ghotul* is well organized, highly disciplined and serves as a training-ground for the youth of the tribe in social, religious and public duties.

1. Unless there is some reason for distinguishing them, I usually include the Jhoria among the Ghotul Muria.

2. W. V. Grigson, *The Maria Gonds of Bastar* (Oxford 1938).



In the pages that follow I shall use many words which I had better explain now. The Maria and Muria tribes are divided up into septs, each of which has a clan-god called the Anga who lives at the Pen-rawar or central headquarters of the clan. He is worshipped by the Pen-gaita or Pen-waddai and these priests are assisted by magicians, diviners or mediums known as Siraha.

The basis of Maria and Muria family life is the distinction between *akomāma* and *dādābhai* relations. The clans are mainly exogamous, though sometimes divided into phratries—a complicated matter into which I cannot go here. All the members of one clan or of related clans are *dādābhai* to each other and are *akomāma* to the members of the clans into which they can marry. The relationship between parents-in-law is known by the Hindi word *samdhi*. The father of my son's wife will be my *samdhi*, and he will have many important duties at my funeral.

Words used in Bastar in connection with death ceremonies are these. The dead are described in Gondi as the *hanāl*, a word which, as Grigson rightly says, is 'a past participial form of the verb *handana*, "to go"; "Departed" is thus a literal translation.<sup>1</sup> Its Halbi equivalent is *dhuma*. The priest of the Departed is called by the Bison-horn Maria Hanal-gaita or Hanagunda. In many Muria villages there is a small shrine for the dead called the Hanalkotor Dhumakot. Memorial menhirs are *urashal* or *kotokhal*.

The other aboriginal tribes in Bastar—the Raja-Muria near Jagdalpur, the Bhattra, the Dhurwa-Parja, the Dorla, the Koya, the Pardhan and the Gond have become more or less Hinduized in their religious ideas and ceremonies. More particularly their death customs have been smoothed out, as it were, and have lost any distinctive features they once had. It is astonishing how whenever an aboriginal people adopt a so-called higher culture, they generally lose any form of culture whatever. I have made a few references here and there to the customs of the Raja-Muria who are closely related to the Maria, but I have not thought it necessary to confuse this paper by drawing comparisons with the customs of the other tribes. In the same way, though I have from time to time drawn attention to cultural parallels in other parts of India, I have not attempted to do this with any kind of thoroughness. I am well aware, of course, that some of the practices of the Maria and Muria are not peculiar to themselves but are known throughout the country. At the same time there are many ideas and customs which seem to me distinctive, and of the highest interest as showing how primitive man has struggled to understand the greatest of all mysteries and how he has set his face against the tragedy of death and has refused to be frightened by it.

## II

### THE ORIGIN OF DEATH

Death is a stranger in the world, alien and unnatural. The first men did not die. The Ghotul Muria have several legends to explain how this evil came into the world. According to one story, from Kokori, it was a boon to counteract the misery of living for ever.

In the old days the Muria did not die, yet they could not keep their youth. They sat in the courts of their houses propped up with bits of wood; they could not use their hands or feet, and their gruel had to be poured into their mouths by their relatives. At last they went to Mahapurub and asked him to give them the gift of death. 'Do you want death for everyone,' he asked, 'or only for yourselves?' 'For everyone,' they replied. From that day both young and old have died.

Another tale attributes the coming of death to Mahapurub's need of *jiwa* or souls to people his kingdom, an idea common also among the Gond and Baiga of the Central Provinces.

1. Grigson, op. cit., p. 223.

In Mahapurub (the Middle World) no men died, and Mahapurub was to get souls for his kingdom. He had a son. He killed him and prepared to carry him out for burial. But when his wife heard of it, she ran weeping to the place and, taking her son from him, sat with the corpse in her lap. Mahapurub said, 'We must bury the child, don't be foolish.' But she cried, 'No, I'll never give him to you.'

Mahapurub then planted a *jamun*<sup>1</sup> tree behind her. When it fruited, some fruits fell to the ground before her. She picked them up and ate and her mouth was reddened with the juice. Mahapurub came again and said, 'Give me the boy. You are a witch, you are eating his flesh.' He brought a mirror and when she saw her reddened mouth, she thought she really was eating the boy. She wept bitterly, but gave the body to Mahapurub. He buried it and from that day death has been in the world.

A different version of the same theme, from Palari, gives some interesting details about the creative process.

At the beginning of the world men were very small; they ploughed with rats and had to pull down brinjals as if they were getting mangoes. The ground was so soft that you could fall through it down to Tarpur (the Lower World). In those days men could remove the tops of their heads, examine them for lice, and put them back again.

When the first men died, their neighbours took them out to burial, but the corpses got up and came back and sat in front of their houses. When the neighbours came in, they asked, 'Where have you been?' 'We've been out burying you.' 'What sort of folk are you? We were just sleeping and you carried us here and there. When we awoke we returned home.'

When Mahapurub heard of this, he wondered how he was to get *jiwa* for his kingdom. He thought, 'I must stick the tops of their heads on; then they will certainly die.' He ground wheat, mixed it with water into a paste and hid it. Then he went to see the first man and woman. 'What have you got inside your heads?' he asked. 'Do show me.' They removed the tops of their heads, and Mahapurub quickly smeared the edges with paste, muttering, 'Never come unstuck again.' When the first man and woman put the tops of their heads back, they stuck and soon afterwards people began to die.

And now for fear that the dead might come back again to their houses, the neighbours burnt their bodies and they never returned to life.

A Bison-horn Maria account from Kutepal describes how,

In former times when the *jiwa* left a corpse it was seen by the village dogs. In those days the Maria could understand their language and the dogs would declare that the *jiwa* had gone to Mahapurub and the people then would not bury the body. Presently the *jiwa* would come down to earth to see its body and the dogs would shout, 'There is the *jiwa* going into the corpse.' The people would run to the body, catch the *jiwa* and the dead man would come back to life. In this way no one died and Mahapurub had no subjects in his Kingdom. So he cursed the dogs saying, 'From this day you will only bark and no one will understand your language.' Yet even now, though they do not understand exactly what they are saying, the Maria know that when a dog barks it has seen a *jiwa* moving above. After Mahapurub had turned the *jiwa* into *dhuma* he sent them to live in the dead man's home and care for it.

In Padbera, the Muria described how before there was a sun and moon there was no life or death; death came with the desire for change and progress. In Kehalakot, the evil was ascribed to the crow in a tale that shows signs of Hindu influence.

1. *Ficus religiosa*, Linn.

Mahapurub sent the water of immortality down to earth by a crow as a gift to men. On its way the crow said in its mind that if men drank this water they would never die and there would be too many of them. Crows would not get enough to eat and there would be no trees to nest on. So the crow drank the water itself and became immortal. But men died.

The same fear of an excess population is revealed in a Bison-horn Maria tale from Dualkarka.

In the old days, even when the dead were cremated, they used to come to life again the following night and return home. In this way there began to be too many men and women in the world—for they were always being born and never died. At last Mahapurub cursed mankind so that no one should ever return again from the dead.

### III

#### THE IDEA OF THE SOUL

The belief in immortality, or at least in some kind of survival after death, is bound up with the idea of the soul. The Ghotul Muria theologians say explicitly that a man has two or even three souls (*jiwa*). In Bakulwahi the villagers said that after death one of these *jiwa* went to Mahapurub, one became a *hanāl* and lived in the Pot of the Departed<sup>1</sup>, and the third became a *chhaiya* or Shade, a ghost that visited his relatives in dreams and often made himself a nuisance. In Randhna, a Muria village on the opposite side of the State near the Orissa border, the people said that,

Every man has two *jiwa*: one lives in his mouth and one in his body—you can feel it going *duk-duk* in the chest. The first *jiwa* goes from the mouth direct to Mahapurub; the other remains in the corpse and goes with the mourners to the grave. It watches the body being burnt or buried from a tree nearby, then goes to the nearest stream and lives there until the people come and catch it in the form of a fish and take it home. Then it lives in the house as a god (*deo*.)

So also in Amgaon, the Jhoria Muria of the Abujhmar foothills said that,

A man has two *jiwa*: one always remains with him; the other, a smaller one, leaves him in sleep and its adventures are what we call dreams. When a man dies the *jiwa* remains near the house and when a child is born we say 'A visitor has come' meaning that the *jiwa* has returned to its own place.

The ability of the *jiwa* to leave the body and its power of independent movement is illustrated by two significant stories. One was told by a middle-aged Muria, Dalsai of Kerawahi.

When I was about fourteen years old I died of small-pox and my *jiwa* was taken to Mahapurub. I watched my parents sitting round my body weeping in their grief. Mahapurub was sitting on a cot: my *jiwa* said to him, 'I'm hungry, give me something to eat.' Mahapurub replied, 'What do you want to eat?' My *jiwa* said, 'Ripe mangoes, ripe figs and plenty of sago palm wine to drink.' Mahapurub said, 'There's nothing to eat here: go back to Manjhpur and have it there.' So my *jiwa* returned to its body and the corpse sat up. I said to my family, 'What are you weeping for?'

I then asked for ripe mangoes, ripe figs and sago palm wine, and my parents gave me everything I wanted. But the Mata (goddess of small-pox feared by Hindus and aborigines alike) said, 'You have escaped from Mahapurub, but you can't escape from me. Give me one of your eyes.' Since then I have been blind in one eye.

Another tale, from Ulera, resembles similar tales recorded in many parts of the world:

One day long ago two men went into a blacksmith's shop and lay down to rest. One fell asleep, and the other lay by his side watching.

1. See p. 106 of this article.

Presently from the sleeper's mouth there came out his *jiwa* in the form of a lizard and went to feed. A dog saw it and chased it into an ant-hill. There it saw a pot full of rupees.

The other man covered the sleeper's face with coal-dust for a joke. When the *jiwa* in the form of the lizard returned it did not recognize its body with the blackened face, and went away seeking for it elsewhere. By and by the second man noticed the lizard going to and fro, and soon realized what had happened. He quickly cleaned the sleeper's face, and the lizard, recognizing the body, entered it, and became a *jiwa* again.

When the sleeper awoke he told his friend what he had seen in his dream, and they went to the ant-hill and found the rupees. This is a true tale of what actually occurred.<sup>1</sup>

The effect of such stories on the simple aboriginal mind is to impress upon it the belief that the soul can exist apart from its bodily integument. Even when that has been shed for ever, dreams prove that the *jiwa* continues to exist, though it is only possible to see it for a few years, up to the time when it is finally mingled with the *hanāl*. It is generally supposed that there is no need to tend or placate a man's soul more than twenty years after his death.

## IV

## RE-BIRTH

Both Maria and Muria have a simple, unmoralized belief in re-incarnation, unconnected with the idea of Karma. The Hill Maria of Komho declared that the *jiwa* of the dead returns in another body within its own family. The Bison-horn Maria also believe that the dead are re-born in their own homes: they deny that they are ever changed into animals. Yet an animal may be born in, or have a powerful influence on, a human being. A girl in Mokhpal was born with the left side of her face covered with hair; the Maria believe that an ancestor was killed by a bear and has been reborn in the child. In this part the wearing of dancing masks covered with bear-fur has been abandoned, for fear that the wearers should be affected in a future birth. A man killed by a tiger may re-appear in one of his descendants with marks of the claws on the neck. To this belief witnesses also the custom, universal among the aboriginals of Central India, of examining a child and taking the omens to discover what ancestor has been reborn in it. In any case, to people who live so near to nature re-birth in animal form does not seem specially distasteful. Maria and Muria live close to their animals and love them. In Lakhpal, I saw a small menhir in memory of a faithful dog.

A curious variant of this belief, which has not been logically worked into the main scheme, is found in Bison-horn Maria ideas about the fate of those killed by tiger or snake. The *jiwa* of a person killed by a tiger is believed to dwell 'with great hardship' in the tiger's tail. When a thorn pricks the tail, the *jiwa* feels the pain. But when the tiger dies, the *jiwa* is free. A victim of snake-bite lives in the snake's tail in similar discomfort. A man who is drowned lives in the reeds growing on the bank of the stream. 'When there is a flood or the reeds are shaken by the wind, the *jiwa* suffers and mourns its fate. Only when the reeds wither is it free.'

Some of the Ghotul Muria have adopted Hindu ideas of judgment and retribution. The following tale, from Kerawahi, is typical.

When a man dies, his fellow *hanāl* take his *jiwa* to Mahapurub. After the proper greetings, Mahapurub says, 'Go and see what your relatives are doing. If you are satisfied and all the ceremonies are properly performed, then return here.' The *jiwa* goes and sits on a tree near the village. When it has seen that its funeral rites have been properly concluded, it returns to Mahapurub who then says, 'What

1. For a similar, Santal, story of the soul which slipped out of its sleeping body in the form of a lizard and was prevented from returning, see B. Bonnerjea, 'The Social and Ceremonial Life of the Santals,' *The Indian Antiquary*, Vol. LIX (1930), p. 100.

good, what evil have you done? How many men have you beaten? From whom have you borrowed and not repaid?' If the man has died with a large debt unpaid his *jiwa* is not allowed to mingle with the Departed but is sent in the form of a bullock to his creditor's house.<sup>1</sup> If a man has beaten many people Mahapurub ties him up with a rope, hangs him upside down and beats him on the buttocks. He is punished like this for twelve years and then sent back to earth as a man. But good men mingle quickly with the Departed; they become gods (*deo*) and mingle with the gods.

Such ideas, with their mixture of primitive doctrine and modern Hindu propaganda, are becoming more and more common in the aboriginal areas. The suggestion that an unpaid debt will be punished after death sounds very like the teaching of an intelligent money-lender. Actually there are no words in Gondi for sin or virtue; a man may be ruined, here and hereafter, for breach of a taboo, but the notion of retribution for sinners is an alien importation.

Have the Muria, at least, any idea of Hell or Heaven? Their myths and folk-tales are full of references to the three worlds—Porrobhum or Uparpur, the abode of Mahapurub or Ispural; Nadumbhum or Manjhpur, the Middle World, the earth on which we live; and Adibhum or Tarpur, the Under World. This typically Hindu conception has the advantage of giving the story-teller three stages or levels to work on and greatly extends the possible range of a hero's adventures. There is frequent communication between these worlds by means of a silken thread let down from above. The daughters of Mahapurub slide down this thread when they visit the world to dance; heroes whose brides have been carried away to the Upper World swarm boldly up it. In at least one tale a god, Bhimul Pen, goes to the Under World to dig for roots.

But as Uparpur is not a heaven where the good are rewarded, so in genuine Muria thought Tarpur is not regarded as a place of punishment for departed sinners. It is occupied by ogres, Dano and Rakshasa; it is an arena for high adventure rather than a place of punishment. Grigson, very properly, mocks at Russell and Hiralal's statement that the Bastar Gonds have 'a conception of retribution after death for the souls of evil-doers' who are 'hurled down into a dense forest without any *salphi* trees' implying that their 'idea of a place of punishment for departed sinners is one in which no alcoholic liquor is to be had.'<sup>2</sup> 'I do not agree, however, that this suggestion 'emanated from a few Jagdalpur Methodist converts.'<sup>3</sup> The idea is entirely in character; it is just the sort of joke that a Muria who had heard of hell and retribution might have developed.

The completeness of the divorce between the fate of the dead and any kind of moral retribution is shown clearly in Maria and Muria ideas about what happens to a woman who dies in pregnancy or child-birth. The purest and sweetest girl who meets with this unhappy lot is condemned to turn into a horrible *succuba* until after a few years she passes to Ratanpur, the land of ogresses, though some villainous money-lender dying of a bad disease may be given every honour after death.

## V

### THE INTERVENTION OF THE DEPARTED IN HUMAN AFFAIRS

But wherever they may be, the dead are believed to be vitally interested in human affairs. The dead are naturally conservative and are particularly interested in maintaining the laws and customs of their tribe. Any breach of the taboos relating to women is specially hateful to them. Adultery is punished, according to both Maria and Muria opinion, by some form of dropsy

1. Bodding recorded a similar notion among the Santal, but added, 'I am under the impression that these ideas play no large role, if any role at all, in the daily life of the Santal.' P. O. Bodding, 'Notes on the Santals,' *Census of India, 1931*, Vol. I, Part IIIB, p. 99.

2. B. V. Russell and Hiralal, *The Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces of India* (London 1916), Vol. III, p. 96.

3. Grigson, *op. cit.*, p. 224.

which is brought upon the offenders by the Departed, to whom elaborate offerings must be made before a cure can be effected. So also in a case of murder or grievous hurt, peace can only be made between the two families if peace is made first between their ancestors. The ceremonial hunt can be ruined by the indignant dead if a woman in the absence of her husband commits adultery with another man.

The Maria and Muria like to associate the dead in all those activities which are dearest to them. Before they drink they generally pour on to the ground a few drops of liquor in honour of the earth and of the dead. At every turn of human life, at every prayer that is offered and every ceremony that is performed, the dead are invoked. They are implored to protect the new-born child, to bless and make fertile the marriage-bed, to protect the children's dormitory, to save the village from wild beasts, to keep famine far away, to ensure a plentiful rainfall, to make the crops rich and punctual, to bring success in hunting or fishing, to save the honey-gatherer from the sting of bees, to guide the falcon to its prey, to protect the boys and girls going out on dancing expeditions, to ensure that the drum gives its accustomed thunder. Life and death are united by these beliefs and rites and the whole of existence is seen as a single sequence in which physical death is but an incident which in no way disturbs the continuity of interest or relationship.

## VI

### FUNERARY RITES

#### (a) *Method of Disposal*

Maria and Muria sometimes cremate and sometimes bury their dead according to circumstances. The Hill Maria cremate important people and the victims of wild animals and bury the rest. The Bison-horn Maria cremate everyone who dies normally, though they too burn people who have been killed by tigers. They bury women who have died in pregnancy or childbirth, or any who have died of small-pox or as the result of an accident. The Ghotul Muria bury important people and sometimes erect elaborate tombs above their remains. They also bury children, *chelik* and *motiari* and the victims of small-pox. They cremate all others.

All the Hill Maria clans lay the corpse face upwards with the head to the east, except the Usendi and Gume clans who put the head towards the west. The Bison-horn Maria and the Ghotul Muria also lay the corpse on its back with the head to the east. The Muria of Padbera said that 'since we came from the east we put the dead with their heads to the east. East is "up" and west is "down."'

#### (b) *The Place of Disposal*

The Hill Maria do not seem to have any special place for burial or cremation: at Komho it was almost inside the village, at Hikul it was some distance away on the far side of a stream. The usual custom is to place the corpse under a *mahua* tree, but in Hikul at least the people had chosen an open site bare of any trees at all.

The Bison-horn Maria take the dead well away into the jungle, beyond a path or stream. They choose a separate place for each clan. If there was anything unusual about the death, they go to some place remote in the jungle.

The Ghotul Muria not only dispose of each clan, but also of each sex, in separate places. Those who die from unusual causes are taken far away into the jungle. In Palari I was told that the remains of a tiger's victim should be burnt on the actual site of his death. Usually the corpse is placed under a *mahua* tree.

The attitude of the people to a cemetery varies greatly. At Hikul not a single Maria would approach it, saying they would certainly die if they went near.<sup>1</sup> In this village the men who have dug the grave and carried

1. I found Kond affected with the same fear, but Bondo were very familiar about their cemeteries.

the bier must remain out in the jungle for three days, even during the rains. Yet at Tadopot, in the Indravaty valley at the foot of the Maria mountains, the Kuruk (a tribe of fishermen closely allied to the Hill Maria) had used their cemetery for cultivation and some of the graves had been completely levelled with the ground, their memorial pillars broken down and the cromlechs below them buried. In Magedha, I saw a trap made by Ghotul Muria children immediately beside a row of memorial stones in the jungle cemetery.

Throughout the Bison-horn Maria country there is a dark and sinister belief that the despised Ganda weavers and Ghasia brass-workers desecrate and rob Maria graves. In Tikanpal, I saw a grave that had obviously been desecrated; the villagers declared that the Ganda had dug it up to get the brass vessels and ornaments that had been buried with the dead. These Ganda appear at night in the form of dead men and even when they are seen at their horrid work no one dares to interfere. In Bara Harmamunda, the Maria said that the Ghasia catch lizards and beat them till they lead them to graves where rupees have been buried for the dead. As a result the Maria often bury the dead man's journey-money away from the cemetery for fear of theft. They also cut the coins in half, for otherwise 'they would come up of their own accord.' In this village Oyami Anda said that his father's mother once saw a Ganda naked, smeared with ashes from the funeral pyre, digging up the place where money had been buried. She called the neighbours and they drove him off with stones. Formerly, the Ghasia used to recite *mantra* to prevent the cloths that are placed on the pyre from burning, so that afterwards they could come and steal them.<sup>1</sup>

### (c) *The Ceremonies of the Hill Maria*

I have not witnessed a Hill Maria funeral, but for the sake of completeness. I will summarize Grigson's excellent account.

After a man's death, his relatives are summoned; the women gather in and round the house where the corpse is lying. The body is not washed or otherwise prepared; friends and relatives carry it just as it is on a simple bier. If the body is to be buried, the bearers bring it to the grave (which is usually only waist deep) lift it off the bier and place it in the grave face upwards. The senior near-kinsman present then throws a clod of earth on the head of the corpse, and says, 'This is all I can now do for you, and I give you my portion.' Then each near-kinsman present flings a clod into the grave, uttering the same formula, followed by five elders of the village. The dead man's *erramtogh* (that is, his wife's elder brother or his own younger sister's husband) brings to the grave the dead man's spare clothes, his ornaments, his axe (but not his bow and arrows), his hoe, his cot, his dancing-clothes and some of his cooking pots. These things are either buried with the body or hung up on *sāja*<sup>2</sup> trees near the grave. When the clods have been dropped on to the body, the earth is shovelled into the grave from all sides and heaped well over it. Leaves are spread on the mound, and logs piled over them. Burial or cremation always takes place in the late afternoon.

Posts of *sāja* wood are cut, stripped of bark and roughly carved. Sometimes crude representations of peacocks are made on the top. As soon as the grave is ready, the *erramtogh* of a dead man or the brother of a dead woman makes at the foot of one of the posts a small stone cromlech, known as *hanāl-garya* (throne of the Departed), pours a little *mahua* spirit at the foot of the posts which are commonly set up at the four corners of the grave and on the table-stone of the cromlech. He offers a chick and ties a bit of cloth from his own house to a *sāja* tree

1. In his account of the Koyl, Thurston writes, 'Ghasias are notorious for opening up the Koyl sepulchres, and stealing the money buried in them.' Again, of the Pano he says I am informed that, on more than one occasion, Panos have been known to rifle the grave of a European, in the belief that buried treasure will be found.' B. Thurston, *Castes and Tribes of Southern India* (Madras 1909), Vol. IV, p. 55 and Vol. VI, p. 76.

2. *Terminalia tomentosa*, W. and A., called *ādan* in Halbi and *mard* in Gondli.

that should overhang the grave. After various other offerings, the grave is generally surrounded with a fence of criss-crossed strips of bamboo.

For a cremation the procedure is much the same. The pyre is lit with a burning log from the hearth of the dead man's house. Instead of clods of earth small bits of wood are thrown on the body.

The bier and cot are left by the grave, and often the dancing-dress of the deceased is placed on top of one of the posts, and his various possessions piled on the grave.

Mourning is observed for four days.<sup>1</sup>

(d) *The Ceremonies of the Bison-horn Maria*

In a Bison-horn funeral the chief actors are the Hanagunda or Hanalgaita who is the master of ceremonies and the sister's son or son-in-law of the deceased. Where there has been a cross-cousin marriage (and such marriages are very common) the sister's son will, of course, also be the son-in-law. There is a Hanagunda for each separate clan. If there are only one or two members of a particular clan in a village, they call Hanagunda from elsewhere. The Hanagunda has to tie thread round the corpse and hang the tail of the sacrificial cow on the menhir. It is his wife's duty to wash the body, and to take cooked rice and *haldi* to the pyre. The sister's son has to climb on the roof to beat a drum to summon the relatives: he sits on the *uraskal* while it is being carried to its hole; he makes the appointed offerings before the stone; he kills the sacrificial and festal cow.

After death the dead man is laid with his head to the east in the middle of the living room of his house. His sister's son takes a stick and measures straight upwards from the corpse's chest to the roof, poking the stick through the thatch. Then he climbs up to the roof and makes a hole which is intended symbolically to allow the message of death to spread out through the world. With the same intention, the people remove any pots of oil that may be hanging up in the house and take off the lids. They turn out of the house any menstruating or pregnant woman, for these would stop the news spreading. The sister's son tears off a bit of the cloth from the dead man's clothes and wraps it round a drum-stick of the castor-oil plant (sometimes it is of *sāja* wood), climbs on the roof, puts his *dhul* drum above the hole, waves the stick thrice round his head and then beats his drum with the rhythm *dung-dung-dung*. He beats with one hand, though the normal method is to beat with two. It is said that for well-known people two drums are used and someone always beats a gong. In Pondum village there was a rule that the drummer should look towards the east and then beat three times. After the drumming has continued for a while, the sister's son comes down from the roof and continues his drumming on the ground.

The Hanagunda's wife now husks some rice, makes it into four packets with leaves and ties two of these under the arms of the corpse and two at its waist. In some villages she bathes the corpse with warm water from a pot which has been brought from the Waddai's house and heated under a *mahua* tree, so that the *jiwa* will return to the same family. She applies to the chest black dust from the bottom of one of the cooking utensils, so that they may be able to recognise him when he is reborn. The granddaughter of the dead man, if available, or some girl in the same relationship passes a string seven times round his three middle fingers and middle toes, again with the intention of ensuring his return to that very house. She tears a piece of cloth from the dead man's body.

I will now describe the actual course of a ceremony which occurred at Penta on 10 February 1942. This funeral is of special interest as the mourners had reason to believe that the dead man was the victim of black magic.

Sori Kosa of Penta had a love affair with the daughter-in-law of Markami Bando which resulted in a serious quarrel between the two

<sup>2</sup> Grigson, *op. cit.*, pp. 271 ff.



families. Kosa's father paid the necessary fine and a special ceremony of peace and friendship was performed. But Bando was not really reconciled. Trouble began for Kosa's family. His son by his first wife died; shortly afterwards another of his sons died. One day Bando spat on Kosa's father in the bazaar. A week later the old man fell ill and died. Kosa's wife and daughter were also taken ill but recovered. The villagers whispered that this was due to Bando's magic, and described how he had made a small doll of earth, had wrapped it up in a *siari*<sup>1</sup> leaf-cup and had carried it away into the jungle. But there was no case for police interference, and the villagers proceeded with the funeral.

After the preliminary rites that I have already described, Kosa's father's relatives assembled. The women brought brass rings and beads and placed them on the corpse; the men brought bits of cloth. The members of the household fasted from the time of the old man's death until he was cremated, but there was a nursing mother there and food for her was brought from outside. The ceremonies were marked by violent manifestations of grief. When the bamboo bier was brought to the house, the wives of the village Perma, Gaita and Hanagunda fell upon it and lay there. They said that this meant that they too wanted to be taken out and burnt, an interesting survival of the psychology that made *sati* possible. Straw was spread on the bier and when the corpse had been placed upon it, bits of cloth were laid on it by the male relatives present. The dead man was of the Sori clan and the bier was carried by two Marvi, one Oyami and one Kawachi. The grand-daughter powdered a little charcoal, mixed it with water and *haldi* and placed it in a leaf-cup. She also prepared some rice in a small bamboo basket specially made for the occasion. The women gathered round the corpse again, kissing it and weeping bitterly. It had been lying with its legs towards the door of the house, but now it was lifted up by the bearers and its position changed so that the head was pointing to the door. They touched the door thrice with it saying, 'You made this house, come here again in your next birth.'

Then, led by the drummers, the corpse was carried out to the cremation ground. The grand-daughter, with her hair undone, followed immediately behind the bier throwing rice upon it as she went along. As they passed a path that crossed their's, they dropped a little rice so that if any other ghost came he would eat it and go away. Everyone went to the funeral. Menstruating women are not normally allowed to attend, though sometimes they may come if they stand at a little distance.

When the party reached the pyre, they went round it anti-clockwise once and placed the bier on the ground. Once again the women fell upon the corpse weeping and kissing it. They lay down beside the pyre and had to be pushed away before the business of the funeral could proceed.

Then one of the women put a little tobacco in the mouth of the corpse. She broke a basket into two pieces and put rice in one and *mung dāl*<sup>2</sup> in the other. The rice was scattered round the bier by the son and the pulse by the brother-in-law of the deceased. Now two men climbed on to the pyre and the body was lifted up and placed upon it. Some of the bits of cloth with which it was covered were left there; the rest were distributed between the drummers and the *akomāma* relatives. The Hanagunda removed the packets of rice which had been tied to the waist of the corpse and threw them to left and right. The body was entirely covered with a cloth and the Hanagunda ripped this open just over the mouth. A piece of *dab* grass which had been brought from the roof of the dead man's house was put into the mouth of the

1. *Bauhinia vahlii*, W. and A.

2. *Phaseolus mungo*.

corpse and then thrown aside. It is very important that the grass should not be burnt. The aim of this was said to be to ensure that the man would be able to breathe on his journey to the next world, though other informants said that it was to allow the soul to escape. The brother-in-law of the dead man then lit a bundle of grass with fire brought from the house and after taking a turn round the pyre set fire to the pile of wood by the head. Another man went round in the opposite direction and fired the wood by the legs.

After the pyre was well alight, the whole company went to a stream and washed themselves. The grand-daughter soaked part of her cloth in water and holding the wet portion in her hand came home and rinsed it out on the very place where the coffin had lain inside the house so that the dead man could drink it.

That night food was brought for the members of the bereaved family from outside, for no cooking could be done in the house. In such food no *haldi* may be mixed. The same night a little rice in one leaf-cup, some pulse in a second, water in a third and tobacco in a fourth and a piece of *amādhī* firewood were taken to the place where two roads met. This was done because the dead man used to eat these things in his lifetime and they wanted him to have his food and water that night. Then he would sleep by the fire and not come to the village to trouble them. Early next morning, the dead man's son-in-law went to the cremation ground to examine the ashes and there found an earthen doll tied in a leaf-cup. This led the Waddai to declare that the death was due to black magic done by Bando and concealed by him in the jungle.

Later in the morning a cow was brought and its legs washed by the deceased's daughter-in-law. After touching its forehead with a little rice she said to it, 'We have given you your share, now don't make us suffer any longer.' One of the drum-beaters touched the cow with his stick and a *samādhī* killed it by a heavy blow with the blunt end of his axe. The *samādhī* then cut the tail, removed the liver and made it into twenty-four pieces in equal shares of six pieces each. Each share was wrapped up in a leaf and roasted. Then the grand-daughter of the dead man cooked some rice to which a little *haldi* was added. She made four leaf-cups which were stitched together in pairs and filled with rice. They were then put in a new specially made basket with the packets containing the liver, and the girl carried them to the cremation ground. The brother-in-law and son of the dead man carried rice and *mung* as they had done on the previous day. In a pot, the deceased's daughter-in-law carried *māndī* grain mixed with water as a substitute for rice-beer. On reaching the place some of the women picked out the bones from the pyre and kissed them. The dead man's son collected any half-burnt pieces of wood and kicked them towards the centre of the pyre. Then they cleared the ash where the corpse's head had been, cow-dunged the place and put the leaf-cups there.

The packets containing the liver were now opened and three pieces from each packet were placed on the ground and three in each of the leaf-cups. The twelve pieces on the ground were for the Earth and the twelve pieces in the leaf-cups were for the *hanāl*. The Waddai made seven piles of rice. He held a piece of wood in his hand and lifting it over each pile several times from right to left uttered *mantra* calling on the soul of the deceased to be content. The dead man's son brought a chicken and made it eat the rice going from right to left three times. The Waddai passed his stick over the chicken each time. However, when the fowl was about to eat it did not follow the proper order and started to eat the *hanāl* before the fourth. The Waddai declared that this was because two persons were involved in the magic. After this had been done three times the dead man's son passed the

chicken between his legs backwards and twisted its neck till it was severed from the trunk. This he threw behind him, holding the head in his hands. He ripped open the head by cutting it through the beak and threw it into the fire. If this was not done, the head might turn into what is called in Gondi *vispitte* (a kind of bird which is known as *jiv chirai* in Hindi) and if this came to the village and called *jiv jiv* all the people would die. Seven stalks of *dab* grass were then brought. The dead man's son held one in his mouth, one under each shoulder and one under his legs. The remaining three pieces were handed to him by the Waddai, one at a time. He passed each between his legs, broke them in half behind him and threw them away. Now he held the other four pieces together, passed them through his legs as before, broke them and threw them away.

They then dug a hole in the earth close to the leaf-cups with a knife and placed a forked *sāja* stick there. The dead man's son stood in front of the stick with his back to it, holding the cow's tail in his hand. He pointed it first at the sun, then to the four corners of the world and lastly to the place where the dead body had been cremated. He did this thrice and then tied the tail to the stick and poured a little rice beer on it. The dead man's wife offered some *mahua* liquor in a leaf-cup, because when her husband was alive one day when they were drinking they had agreed to die together. The Waddai, therefore, said as she was giving the liquor, 'Do not also take her away with you; release her from her promise; let her live for a while and look after the other members of the family.' Then the deceased's son and brother-in-law, who had carried the rice and pulse threw it down near the stick. The dead man's son who had also taken with him a little thatch from the roof of his house now threw this at the stick saying, 'You built the house, now accept this.' Similarly, all the other things of which the old man had been fond when he was alive were thrown there. His son-in-law, however, picked up his bow and arrow and his knife was taken by one of the drum-beaters. The drum-beaters then threw away the sticks with which they had beat the drums into the ashes of the pyre.

Once again the party went to the stream; but the Perma and the Waddai stayed behind and addressed the *sāja* stick: 'For one month more you will get nothing, don't go to your house but stay here.' After a bath they all (with the exception of the drum-beaters) went to the deceased's house. The drummers also bathed and washed their drums. They applied oil to their own bodies and to the drums. They broke an egg and placed some rice on the drums. They sacrificed a chicken and gave the blood and some liquor to the drums. The drummers were then given rice, which they cooked separately, and a shoulder of the cow. After eating their food they went to their own houses, not to the deceased's house.

Half the remaining cow's flesh was given with some rice to the people who cut the wood for the pyre, and they too cooked and ate it separately. The remaining meat was cooked in another house and sent to the dead man's place and those who were not in any way related to the deceased ate it. For the home members and relatives special pulse and rice, again cooked outside, was sent. If the home members were to eat the cow's flesh it would look as if they were eating the dead man's flesh because the cow was sacrificed in his honour. No *haldi* was mixed in the pulse which the home members and the relatives ate, again because the dead man was offered *haldi* and *haldi* oil had been put on his body.

The conclusion of the story is worth recording. A month later, the Waddai went with the villagers to the boundary of the village to the boundary of the village carrying a chicken, a pig, an egg, egg-shells, a bamboo bow and arrow, burnt

earth from below a hearth, charcoal powder, rice, *kosra*<sup>1</sup>, *mung*, *māndia*, *urda*<sup>2</sup>, and *haldi*. All these things were taken in separate leaf cups. The Waddai arranged them in seven rows and made a chicken eat the rice, calling on Markami Bando's magic to go away. The chicken ate the rice quickly. But this was not sufficient proof that the black magic had really been driven away, 'because every hungry creature will naturally feed upon what it can get.' The Waddai, therefore, tortured the chicken, first by breaking one leg, and still it ate; he broke another leg, and again it ate; then he broke the wings and the fowl though in pain and agony went on eating. It was now beyond doubt that Bando's magic had been dealt with successfully and the chicken was thrown away, still alive, and not sacrificed. The pig was then sacrificed and the Waddai drew a line on the boundary of the village where the seven rows were arranged, spat there and said, 'Away from this line,' and they all departed without looking back. In this ceremony the household members did not take part.

The next day the Waddai sacrificed under a *mahua* tree near the house a white chicken and broke an egg in honour of the *hanāl* of Kosa's father. After this the Waddai entered the house and sprinkled it with a mixture of milk, *sāja* bark and *dab* grass to purify it and sacrificed a black chicken for the Departed of the family.

(e) *The Ceremonies of the Ghotul Muria*

The death customs of the Ghotul Muria vary from place to place. In the west they are dominated by Hill Maria influence. In Amgaon, the Jhoria Muria said that their funerary rights were 'things of the Maria Raj.' As we move east, where the Muria population probably represents an earlier Gond immigration from the north, customs are not unlike those typical of the Gond of the Central Provinces. The north-east of Bastar, however, has been more open to Hindu influence and it is not always easy to tell what the original traditions were.

I will first describe one of the several funerals that I have witnessed, and then give any variations that I have recorded elsewhere.

On the night of 8 December 1940, in Bauri, a village of the Abujmar foothills, a woman of about forty years named Dhako, the wife of Genjru of the Wadder clan, died and was carried home on a rough litter to her husband's house at Amgaon. She had died of 'a watery swelling of the body,' perhaps dropsy, which is generally regarded as a punishment for adultery. The people were very reticent about speaking of the cause of her death and I never was able to hear the real story: there may have been a scandal.

Since it is taboo for a woman to sleep on a cot, Dhako died on the ground and was again laid on the floor of her own house covered with a sheet. Many women, assembled in the house and outside in the street, wailed loudly from time to time. Gradually the relatives gathered and when all were there, the corpse was carried out on a bamboo mat into the courtyard. Six women sat round weeping. An old woman of the Wadder clan (which can marry with the Potabi clan to which the dead woman originally belonged), but not a member of the family, now tied a little rice and a cowrie in knots on either side of the cloth. There were three knots on each side joined by a thread which ran criss-cross over the body. They did not bathe the corpse nor close the eyes, but the woman's little daughter, a child about five years old, put *haldi* on her mother's face, and the other female relatives present did the same.

Meanwhile a group of *chelik*, most of whom were related to Genjru, were busy making a sort of ladder to serve as bier. This they covered with dry grass. The corpse was lifted out and placed on the bier. the *chelik* took it on their shoulders and went into the jungle followed by

1. Known elsewhere as *kutki*, *Panicum miliaceum*.

2. *Phaseolus radiatus*.

both men and women. Genjru's younger sister followed immediately behind the bier throwing rice over it. Another woman carried a basket containing three different kinds of roots and bits of *haldi*.

The Muria cremate the bodies of those who die of yaws, leprosy and dropsy, so a party of *chelik* went ahead to prepare the pyre. When the bearers reached the place, which was in thick jungle, on the far side of a stream, away from the usual disposal ground, they carried the corpse round the pyre, which was below a great *mahua* tree, three times anti-clockwise, and then laid it on the ground to the south-west of the pyre with the feet to the west.

Each of the relatives present then came forward and laid a small piece of cloth on the body. Dhako's father-in-law (a father-in-law or an elder brother is often the chief actor at a funeral) poured out some *mahua* spirit by the head of the corpse saying, 'To-day accept this from our hands; after to-day how will you get it again?' They then removed most of the clothes, but tied one piece to a branch of the *mahua* tree and took the rest home to distribute among the children.

The *chelik* lifted the corpse on to the pyre and the old Wadder woman placed a little earth on *sāja* leaves at either side of the head. She took a stone and broke Dhako's bangles 'for now she is separated from her husband, she is a widow.' They put a little gruel and water by the head, leaving the pot there. The *chelik* piled wood and dry grass round the pyre, but none was actually laid on the body. They rested the bier against the pile of wood and one of the boys broke it with his axe, then struck the ground all round—to represent the driving of nails 'to close the house' and prevent the ghost walking, and then two of them threw it to and fro over the pyre three times.

Now the same *chelik* who had carried the bier lit bundles of grass from a coil of paddy-straw rope which had been brought slowly smouldering from the hearth of Genjru's house, and ran quickly two by two round the pyre in opposite directions kindling the dry grass. The flames shot up and the women broke into a loud and moving lamentation. The men threw twigs (of any tree) on to the burning corpse, muttering, 'God to whom we vowed gifts has failed us. Let him take these twigs instead, for it's all he'll get.'

The people stayed for a while, some of them looking up fearfully at the smoke to see if it would go straight into the air or no, then returned slowly and sorrowfully to Genjru's house. The father-in-law met us and distributed oil which was rubbed on face, hands and legs instead of a bath. He gave tobacco and liquor to those who had brought pieces of cloth to cover the corpse, but not to others. The people then slowly and quietly dispersed.

When the corpse is buried, similar customs are observed. On 12 November 1941 I assisted at the funeral of Bhaira, a middle-aged man of the Halami clan at Gorma. The bier was covered with plantain leaves and the corpse bound firmly to it with cord. Here it was the dead man's daughter-in-law who, with hair untied, followed the bier. When they reached the grave, which was about five feet deep, the village Siraha put a little cow-dung at the bottom, placed plantain leaves above and on the leaves some sticks. After the corpse had been lowered into the cavity, it was covered with plantain leaves, and the Gaita let a few drops of liquor fall by the corpse's head saying, 'When you were alive, I could give you nothing, but at least take this now.' After the grave had been filled in, large stones were placed upon the mound. The men went to bathe, but the women remained. The dead man's widow brought a pot containing all that was left of the food that had been cooked for the deceased on the day of his death, and emptied it near the grave. She was then persuaded by the other women to sit down above her husband's head. Weeping bitterly, she cried, 'All these days you were with me. Now you have left your wife and gone away. So take your bangles, I don't want them any more.' She broke the bangles and threw them on the grave.



QUARRYING STONES AT DUGELI. WATER IS BEING POURED OVER THE  
STONE TO CRACK IT INTO THE DESIRED SHAPE

ROW OF URASKAL STONES NEAR MASSENAR





DANYAKAL STONE AT PALNAR

URASKAL BEING CARRIED TO THE PLACE OF ERECTION AT MASSENAR





NEWLY ERECTED URASKAL STONE NEAR ARANPUR. THE COW'S TAIL IS STILL ATTACHED TO THE APEX AND THE POLES WITH WHICH IT WAS CARRIED CAN BE SEEN IN THE BACKGROUND





MURIA TOMB AT GUDRIPARA

MURIA TOMB AT MALAKOT





MEMORIAL PILLAR  
AT BARE ARAPUR



MEMORIAL PILLAR OF MUCHAKI HUNGA  
NEAR DILMILLI



MEMORIAL PILLAR NEAR CHINGER.  
NOTE THE CROMLECH AT THE BASE

In Amgaon the rite of the dead fish was omitted, probably because no fish were available. But in Gorma, when oil was given to the guests for their purification, they were also offered a small dead dry fish floating in oil. They had to touch this and make a mark on the Gaita's forehead with a drop of the oil; he did the same for each of the guests.

Ceremonies vary considerably according to the age and status of the deceased. Thus when a young bride died at Temrugaon on 22 March 1941, it was the *cheli* who took a leading part in the ceremonies and some of them made a pathetic reference to her youth of happiness in the *ghotul*. Here it was three women, the girl's mother and two sisters, who poured liquor, not on to the ground, but into her mouth. Three *cheli* broke the bangles: each placed one hand on one stone and their leader smashed the bangles with another. Most of the other ornaments were removed and distributed as gifts to the *motiari*. But the little wooden block round which a Muria girl's hair is tied was placed in the grave above her head along with the broken bangles and one necklace. After the earth had been filled in, the women poured a little oil and some gruel from a gourd on to the head of the grave.

The sense of outrage, the feeling that something has gone wrong, that the magicians have failed and the gods have betrayed them is almost as marked as the deep and genuine grief of the mourners. We have already noticed how they said at Amgaon, 'God to whom we vowed gifts has failed us.' At Gorma the family had promised a goat to Gondin Pen, a pig to Tallur Muttai, another pig to the Rau and a chicken and coconut to the Departed of the family and clan. At the funeral, just before the grave was filled in, the dead man's son stood by the head of the grave and broke a small stick into five pieces. He threw one piece into the grave and said, 'I promised Gondin Pen a goat if you lived. But you died and this is all she'll get.' He threw the second piece and said, 'I promised Tallur Muttai a pig if you lived. But you died and this is all she'll get.' And so on. At Temrugaon the husband and father of the dead girl stood at the head of the grave holding seven *sāja* twigs. The others present said to the husband, 'If she were alive, what would you give?' He replied, 'A goat, a pig, a hen' and so on, and at each answer threw one of the twigs into the grave.

When an old and distinguished Muria dies, the ceremonies are more elaborate. The body is carried out to burial with singing and dancing. An *akomāma* relative beats the *hatur dhol* to summon the relatives and then goes dancing and beating his drum before the bier, singing, 'O dead man, now you are sleeping with your feet turned up, and your penis is pointing to the sky.' It is one of the social duties of the *cheli* and *motiari* to attend such funerals and escort the bier.

#### VII.

#### DIVINING THE CAUSE OF DEATH

As we have seen, it is always important at a funeral to discover the cause of so monstrous and unnatural a thing as death. I have already recorded several ways of doing this and I will now add a few more. The *Ghotul* Muria, when magic is suspected, sometimes halt the bier before it reaches the burial ground and the *Siraha* medium recites a string of names of suspected persons. When the name of the guilty man is mentioned, the bier moves forward violently of its own accord. This method, which resembles the use of an Anga clan-god for divination, is common throughout the State, and Grigson has recorded a similar, though more elaborate, rite in use among the Hill Maria.<sup>1</sup>

At Kehalakot, the Muria reported that they remove some locks of the dead man's hair and a little earth from beneath his head. They make a little flag-pole with the hair and the earth and a *sāja* leaf stuck on a stick of ebony wood. They take this to the jungle and a boy holds it while the *Siraha* recites the names of any suspected causes or people. When the right word is uttered, the flag is said to quiver. At Kaker the villagers go to the

1. Grigson, op. cit., p. 272.

boundary and put five heaps of rice in a row, one for Mahapurub, one for witchcraft, one for Mother Earth, one for the ancestors of the house, and one for any local godling who may have been troublesome. The people sit some distance away, and spend the time having their hair done by relatives by marriage. Presently a crow flies down and pecks at one or other of the piles of rice, thus revealing the cause of death.

The *thumkukri* divination is done with chickens on the second or third day after death. One chicken is taken from the house of the dead and one from the house of a *samdhi*. The chickens are exchanged so that a representative of the dead person's house holds the *samdhi's* chicken and *vice versa*. The usual piles of rice are made and the chickens held before them while a string of names is recited. When the chickens peck at the rice, it is believed that they have revealed the cause of death. The chickens are then sacrificed and cooked with the rice on the spot.

It is commonly believed all over India, as by the Muria, that the way the smoke rises from the funeral pyre indicates the sort of death the deceased has suffered. If the smoke goes straight up, it indicates a natural death; if it goes crooked, it proclaims the hand of witchcraft.

The Bison-horn Maria go to the pyre the day following a cremation and examine the ashes. If any of the wood remains unburnt, this certainly indicates a death by magic. Often various signs and marks are found among the ashes. Thus if a man dies as a result of an enemy's working magic on him after a dispute about rice, there will be marks of rice on the ashes. If the quarrel has been about the division of the flesh of a deer or the theft of a cow, similar signs will be found. In Gudra a boy who had stolen some *kosra* millet died in February 1942 as a result, it was believed, of the magic of the family from whom he stole. They are said to have cooked some *kosra*, infected it with their magic, and sent it into the boy's stomach so that he died. Among the ashes of his pyre was found a small basket full of millet, and this was accepted as proof that this was how the boy had died.

The Bison-horn Maria have a method of discovering whether there will be further tragedies in a house. They throw rice into a stream: if it floats up-stream, there will be another death. They put an egg in the water: if it sinks all will be well.

## VIII

### PRECAUTIONS AGAINST THE RETURN OF THE GHOST

It is essential, as we have already seen, to prevent the ghost of the Departed from returning to his house, and various precautions are adopted to ensure this. Offerings are made to it, and it is begged to stay away. The corpse is often carried by a round-about path to the cemetery; the tools used for digging the grave or cutting the wood for the pyre are 'disinfected' by being thrown to and fro; marks are made round a grave or pyre to symbolize the fact that the ghost is shut up there as in a house. For really dangerous ghosts, the ghosts of women dying in child-birth or of tiger-victims there are elaborate ceremonies which we will discuss later. But even for ordinary harmless people precautions must be taken.

Sometimes as the corpse is being carried out, the bearers stop at every cross-roads and throw away an egg, the earthen cover of a pot and a small bundle of rice tied up with straw to protect the cattle, the cooking vessels in the house and every kind of crop, from the malice of the dead. In the Paralkot area I found a custom of taking two leaf-cups of rice, one of water and one of curry, out of the village after a funeral. The Muria made a hearth of stones and put rice-chaaff and a little wood in it; they placed the leaf-cups nearby. They lit the fire and put an empty black pot on the hearth and pushed a stick into the pot and broke it. Then they went quickly away without looking round.

When the boy died at Gudra after stealing *kosra*, the Gaita used a phrase — 'God has fished him out of the pot of the world with his hook and line.' So the Maria made a hook of wax, a small figure of the boy and a grass cow

and took them to the boundary and threw them away. To protect the rest of the family, the Waddai made the parents and a younger brother sit on the threshold of their house and placed rice and money on their heads, hands and feet.

In the same village, I found the Bison-horn Maria believed that many other ghosts are attracted by a funeral. As the party goes towards the cemetery, therefore, it is necessary to sprinkle some rice on the ground wherever they cross another path. Then the visiting ghosts stop to count the grains and are thus delayed until the ceremony is over.

In the Konta Tahsil, and possibly elsewhere, the Maria make a bundle of any bits of bamboo left over after they have finished the bier and the special baskets which are taken to the pyre or grave. This bundle is taken to any path running between the village and the pyre and left there, apparently with the same idea of cutting the ghost's path.

These practices testify not only to the urgent necessity of getting rid of the ghost, but also to its extraordinary stupidity. Tricks that would not deceive a child completely bamboozle a ghost, a fortunate circumstance for it means that protection can easily be ensured and at a small cost.

But a village must not only be protected, it must also be purified from the stain of death. In many Ghotul Maria villages, the Kadri-gaita (the Knife-priest<sup>1</sup> who worships the Village Mother) lights a lamp and places it either under a *sāja* tree or in the Village Mother's shrine in order to purify the village.

## IX

## 'BRINGING BACK THE SOUL'

The rite of 'bringing back the soul' is known to the Hill Maria and the Bison-horn Maria, but is most common among the Ghotul Maria who practice it in many different forms. Since this rite is performed throughout the Central Provinces, and since these Maria probably represent an ancient migration from the north into Bastar, it is not surprising that we should find this cultural link between them.

It is rather difficult to describe these rites because of the bewildering variety of detail to be discovered from village to village, but it is possible to get a fairly clear picture of the main outlines.

After death, on the following day or at any time up to three years, when there is sufficient provision in the house, all the relations of a dead man are summoned for a feast. Sometimes the relations are warned by a dream that the spirit of the dead is dissatisfied and that they must do something to comfort and honour him.

The people assemble, both *akomāma* and *dādābhai* relatives, and enjoy a feast in the dead man's house. The next morning they go singing, both men and women, attended by *chelik* and *motiāri* with their drums and cymbals, to the nearest tank or river. In some villages a *samdhi* makes a small booth on the bank; nine reeds are planted in the ground and bamboo poles are tied to them and a string run round them seven times. The *samdhi* puts a small mat and on the ground he makes a circle with red and black powder and places an egg in the middle in the name of Yer Kanyang (the Water Maiden). The Gaita then puts three rings of *aonra*<sup>2</sup> fibre in the circle and an earthen pot filled with water.

The near relatives of the deceased then go into the water, crying on the dead to come to them, and try to catch any kind of living thing. Whoever first catches a fish or prawn or frog, whatever it may be, is regarded as being specially loved by the dead and is rewarded with extra drinks and small presents. They put the fish into the pot together with a ring. The pot is covered with a bamboo cover on which is a new cloth. The *akomāma* relative applies *haldi* and oil to the pot and as he is doing this someone else

1. The priest of the Village Mother must never touch a corpse even in his own house, and when he is dead his own son (who will inherit his functions) must not touch his body.

2. *Phyllanthus emblica*, Linn.

catches hold of every member of the party in turn, both men and women, and smears their private parts with *haldi*-oil. Then a girl (daughter or daughter-in-law to the dead) lifts the pot, puts it on her head, carries it up to the house and puts it down near the Pot of the Departed. An *akomāma* relative sacrifices a chicken after testing it in the usual way; when the chicken eats the rice offered, it is a sign that the spirit of the dead man loves his family as before. Then they pour the water together with the fish and ring on to the ground and tie the ring, which represents the man's soul, from the roof above the Pot of the Departed. Sometimes the ring is tied to a broom. They hang the pot itself up to the roof of the house. They eat the sacrificed chicken and drink and dance and then disperse. An *akomāma* relative makes a mixture of the water in which rice has been cleaned, the bark of the mango tree and a little cow's milk and sprinkles the whole house in order to purify it.

Some time afterwards at one of their clan festivals the members of the family take either the pot or simply the ring that has been hung in the Room of the Departed to the clan-shrine. In some villages this is only done for men: women stay in the house. But at others, the souls of both men and women were taken to the Hanalkot. In Kerawahi they said that at the special festival for Bara Pen, which occurs every two or three years, all the members of the Poyami clan take the pots in which the soul has been brought from the river along with the rings to the shrine of their clan-god. They sacrifice fowls saying, 'Here is the god of Lanjhi-Dhamda (the traditional place whence the Muria migrated south into Bastar State), you go to him and you will become like him. As he helps us, so you too help us.' They tie the ring to a tree overlooking the shrine and break the pot. Then after the usual feast they go home.

Sometimes, however, the people take the *jiwa* direct to the Hanalkot. This is a small shrine for the dead, generally under a *sāja* tree. They put the pot containing the *jiwa* and the ring down near the tree and sacrifice two hens, one for the dead man's family and the other for his *akomāma* relatives. They feed these saying, 'Have you come happily to-day? Don't trouble us, you are to become a god. Always help us and don't trouble us.' When the chickens eat, thus showing that the *jiwa* is pleased, a member of the family kills one chicken and a relative by marriage kills the other. On the place where the chickens are sacrificed, they pour out the water and the *jiwa* from the pot. They tie the ring by a single thread to the tree, thus 'mixing him' with the dead. Everyone who came should have brought a chicken and these are now killed with sticks and roasted. The two sacrificed chickens may only be eaten by those who killed them. They drink liquor and dance and sing and then go dancing home.

In Kanhargaoon it is the dead man's daughter or sister who brings the *jiwa* in its pot. They go singing and dancing to the Hanalkot where they place the pot on the ground. They make a hole in the roof of the shrine. From the hole to the pot they tie a stick, then they sacrifice a pig or chicken on the roof and, if the blood flows down the stick and so drips into the pot, they believe that the *jiwa* has come home.

There is the following custom in Kehalakot, a Ghotul Muria village. The *jiwa* is brought home after the erection of a menhir. The mourners go to the river and make a little booth with reeds and cover it with a new cloth. Inside they put two earthen pots. They anoint these with *haldi* oil and go round the booth seven times. Then two *motiāri*, one representing the household and the other the *akomāma* relatives, each of exactly the same height, pick up the pots, cover them with new cloth, and carry them on their heads to the Hanalkot. Here there is always an earthen pot preserved in honour of the dead. An *akomāma* relative makes a bamboo stand similar to those used for sitting hens and puts the old pot on it. The girls then put their pots above the old pot, one on top of the other. The *akomāma* climbs on to the roof and making a hole above the pots, ties a rolled-up date palm leaf from the hole into the mouth of the upper pot. A pig is handed up to

him and he sacrifices this on the roof in the name of the dead man. The blood falls down into the pot, and the people cry that the soul has returned to its home. They offer liquor to the dead and say, 'All this time you have been outside among the trees and rocks and in the hills. Now all of you Departed live happily together; let not the ancient dead quarrel with the new. Give no trouble to our children and let our cattle be free from harm.'

In the Bara Dongar Pargana the Muria have a very impressive death-dance for this occasion. A man wearing a beard of bear's hair, four horns of the barking-deer tied on his forehead, a fishing-net round his loins, a wooden doll in one hand, a bent stick in the other leads the way from the river up to the house. In front of him one relative by marriage carries water and one a stick. As they go along they beat the path and throw water on it saying 'We are making a road before you; come slowly leaning on your stick; we are making a road for you; come *akomāma* to your house, don't stay outside.'



WOODEN DOLL, REPRESENTING SOUL OF THE DEAD, CARRIED BY MURIA DURING THEIR DEATH DANCE

The bearded man, who is supposed to represent the soul of the dead, weary, hungry and exhausted, comes walking slowly, bent like an aged man. Soon he falls to the ground exclaiming, 'I can go no farther.' Then the relatives by marriage say, 'You must drink this gruel' and they give him a drink of liquor and pull him up on his feet. He goes on a little more and falls down again. Other people dance round him beating sticks against each other and singing. He falls down again and again, exclaiming that he is too weary and hungry to go farther.

When they get near the house the bearded man with his two attendants roll on the ground and the family has to come out and beg them to bring the *jiwa* in. 'We will pay you your wages,' they say, meaning that they will give them plenty of liquor. The daughter or sister of the deceased comes out with *haldi*, rice and water in a dish and washes the feet of the man who represents the *jiwa*.

Inside the house they place a small stump, eight inches high, in the ground in the name of Bara Pen. There is a nail in the pot and they hang the pot containing the fish on this and the relatives put *haldi* on it and offer pice to it saying, 'We have brought you here for your last marriage.' They sacrifice a cock to Bara Pen saying, 'Now keep this *jiwa* with you.'

They pour the water from the pot over the stump of the dead man who is thus supposed to bathe in it. There is a curious idea that the fish must disappear from the pot or it will mean that the *jiwa* has not 'flown out of the pot to mingle with his ancestors.' Once when Lahari Maravi's father died, a witch kept the fish in the pot and would not let it fall out. They had to make special sacrifices before the soul was able to mingle with the Departed.



## X

## THE BAZAAR CEREMONY

In some villages in the Kondagaon Tahsil the Muria go to the nearest bazaar to buy parched rice, gram and liquor. They walk round the bazaar scattering the rice and gram and then visit the grave of the dead. Here they eat and drink a little and go home, saying to the spirit of the dead, 'Come home with us.' They go into the Room of the Departed and it is believed that the *jiwa* follows them.

The mourners go to a bazaar. The women carry rice, bread, and sweets in their baskets and sit down near the market place, but away from it. They pretend to have a bazaar of their own and the men of the party go to them and pretend to buy. The widow or the chief female mourner, if the deceased was a man, comes and sits in the middle of the party; the Gaita offers fire and incense and the rest give her leaves and flowers. In some villages it is supposed that it is at this time that the soul of the dead man mixes with his ancestors. Then the widow leads the party anti-clockwise round the bazaar and comes home. On their arrival at the house the mourners say to her, 'Now let us depart. You have had great sorrow, for your life has left you. You have had great expense, but don't worry. Live happily and eat your fill. God has given you sorrow, but if you brood on this sorrow overmuch who will care for your children?'

In the Mardapal Pargana they performed the same ceremony by walking round the place where the cattle rest at mid-day. In other villages, specially those at some distance from a bazaar, the people hold a mock bazaar in their own compound, putting out for sale old clothes, bits of wood, seeds and beans. Instead of money they use the broken pieces of an earthen pot. This does not seem to take the place of the ordinary ceremony of bringing the *jiwa* in a pot from the river, but is supplementary to it.

If for any reason, these ceremonies are not performed, a cock is sacrificed annually at the year's mind; a *sāja* 'tooth-twigg' is also given so that the dead man can clean his teeth before eating.

The ceremonies are confused and vary from village to village and even from time to time. But the main outlines are clear. The soul of the dead man is supposed to be living outside his home and must be brought back. People go to the nearest stream or tank and catch some living creature which they bring with dance and song, and sometimes with an elaborate ceremonial to his old home. There they believe the soul will rest for a time. Afterwards they take the ring representing the soul to the central shrine of the members of the clan. There is thus a double mingling of a man's soul with the Departed, first with the immediate members of his own family in his own house, and then with all the members of his clan.

## XI

## THE POT OF THE DEPARTED

Funeral rites and memorial pillars or stones emphasize the importance of the dead to the outside world and to the neighbours, but for the family attention centres round the Hanal Kunda or Pot of the Departed, a large earthen pot which is kept in a dark corner of the inner room of a Hill Maria house and in the store-room by the Bison-horn Maria. Among the Hill Maria this room is often called the Hanal Kholi or Room of the Departed. In addition to the Pot there is also a Hearth of the Departed on which the housewife must cook new grain at each of the First-Eating Festivals. In the same room various stores are kept. Among the Bison-horn Maria the room dedicated to the dead is the Wijja-lon, the third of the three buildings of which their homes are normally composed. This room is generally used as the seed-room or granary and is almost entirely filled with a large platform on which pots, baskets and sacks are placed. In one corner, however, there is the Pot of the Departed and near it the sacred hearth. The Jhoria Muria and other Ghotul Muria also keep the Pot inside their houses, sometimes in the ordinary store-room, sometimes in the granary.

As we move east across the Kondagaon Tahsil, however, the custom shows signs of weakening and there are villages where a special permanent Pot is not preserved in private houses, though there is usually one in the Hanalkot, or corporate house of the dead.

This Pot of the Departed is quite distinct from the little pots in which the soul of the dead man is brought back to the house and taken to the Hanalkot in order to be mingled with his house and clan-ancestors. It is a permanent Pot to which special offerings are made on all important occasions of Maria and Muria life. For example, the Hill Maria woman should put a little flour in honour of her ancestors into the Pot whenever she grinds. Grigson has described how on the day the first seed is to be sown in the clearings, the head of each family picks two *sāja* leaves to serve as 'seed-leaves.' He puts these on the floor near the Pot of the Departed and squats down-before them, raises his hands palm to palm to his forehead, and lowers them, fists closed, to the floor in front of the leaves saying, 'Hearken, O ancestors, we adjure you; hearken now and let us have an excellent harvest. Let not your wrath now fall upon us, and be not deaf to my prayer.' He then hangs the two leaves from the kitchen roof where they remain till next seed-time.<sup>1</sup> So also at the various First-Eating Festivals house-wives cook on the Hearth of the Departed and offer a few grains to the Pot. When a clearing in the jungle is to be fired for cultivation or sacrificial fires are to be lit, the fire must be brought from the Hearth of the Departed in the house of the village priest.

Among the Bison-horn Maria the women cook new grain and various vegetables in the Pot of the Departed at the Kurum, Korta and Jata Pandum. The husband and other members of the family sacrifice chickens before the Pot. The first solid food given to children is cooked in the Pot at the Jata Pandum in December or January. At marriages the Perma of the village tells the head of the bridegroom's clan to cook in the Hanal-lon of the bridegroom's house and when a bride comes to her new home, one of the things that the mother-in-law says to her is, 'Now, this Pot is yours.' At a funeral the Hill Maria sacrifice of cow or pig is generally performed in front of the Pot of the Departed and the Bison-horn Maria also, after a *menhir* has been erected, sacrifice there a cock in honour of the dead.

Similar customs exist among the Ghotul Muria. Women put a little rice and flour from time to time into the Pot. In the north of the State, at Khutgaon, two Pots were kept for the dead in the kitchen, one full of rice and the other empty. At every meal the housewife transferred a pinch of rice from the full into the empty Pot in honour of the Departed. When the empty Pot was filled members of the household (but no others) cooked and ate it. At an engagement ceremony, a cowrie is put in the Pot to compensate the family ancestors for the loss of a girl from their clan.

There are various rules about this Pot. No man may remove anything from it. No unmarried girl above the age of puberty may approach it. The reason for this is that the unmarried girls of the family will shortly be leaving the house and will be transferred to another clan and their connection will be with a different Pot in someone else's house. At a Muria marriage also, when the bride comes to her new home, her mother-in-law shows her the Pot of the Departed and a rice-husker saying, 'These things now are yours, care for us, honour the dead, give food to all, entertain strangers.'

## XII

### MEMORIALS TO THE DEAD

Throughout Bastar *menhirs* are erected in memory and for the plaction of the dead. The Hill Maria, the majority of the Bison-horn Maria, some of the Dorla, the Jhoria Muria and Ghotul Muria of the west still maintain their megalithic culture. Even the Muria of the east continue it in a special form that we will presently consider. The custom has, however, been abandoned in certain areas and by certain clans.

1. Grigson, op. cit., p. 183.

Two kinds of stone are erected. The upright menhir is generally called *uraskal*, from Gondi *urasa*—to bury, and *kal*—a stone. Among the Bison-horn Maria these stones are sometimes of enormous size, twelve or thirteen feet high, six or seven feet broad and over a foot thick. Such stones are even now erected, though the general tendency is, perhaps, to make them smaller. The Hill Maria stones are nearly always smaller; 'the largest that I have seen,' says Grigson, 'at Lakka in Kutru Mar, were just over eight feet high, and about two and a half feet wide by ten inches thick at the base.'<sup>1</sup> But most Hill Maria stones are much smaller than this and the Jhoria and Ghotul Muria use still smaller stones, and the Muria of east Kondagaon sometimes set up little menhirs not more than a foot tall.

*Uraskal* is the word most commonly used in Dantewara; in the north of the State *kotohal* is more often heard. At Surewahi, near Antagarh, the villagers called the two hundred and forty menhirs of their memorial field *khamakal*. The word *gatakal* is also occasionally used. In Sukma Zamindari, the Maria speak of the *khutamkal*.

The menhirs are erected for men, women and children, and usually stand in long rows by the roadside, near the village boundary, in the neighbourhood of the cemetery, or even in the village itself. Nearly always a small flat stone supported on two other stones is placed at the foot. This little cromlech is called the *hanul-garya*, or 'ghost-throne,' and is used as an altar of sacrifice. Stones for men and women are usually put separately, and anyone who has died a suspicious death has his menhir apart from the others. At Aranpur, I saw a small stone commemorating a child who had died of snake-bite isolated from the rest, on the far side of the road.

Several clans do not erect the upright *uraskal* menhirs, but place large flat slabs of stone on four boulders in honour of their dead. The upper stone is called *danyakal*, and its supports *odiyal*. In the Kutru Zamindari, the Arki clan call the upper stone *gariyakal*. Grigson says that 'the Birya-Marvi and the Kuhrami clans are the only two which always make *danyakal* and never set up *uraskal* stones; all the other clans, even in the Marvi and Kuhrami phratries, and including the small or Chudala Marvi clan, erect *uraskal* stones.'<sup>2</sup> This is not quite correct. The Chudala Marvi clan in many areas—in Konta Tahsil, for example, and in villages like Gogonda, Mankapal and Koya Vekur—erect both *danyakal* and *uraskal* memorials. So do the Sori, Miriami, Kalmumi and Markami clans. The *danyakal* is indeed becoming more and more popular; it is supposed to confer a certain dignity on the family that has it; and for some reason it is said to be cheaper. Other clans who sometimes use the *danyakal* stones are the Tati, Muchaki, Vetti, Hemla, Oyami, Birya Barse, Punem, Durro and Rawa.

Remarkable memorials of the *danyakal* type are those to the homicides Marvi Masa and Marvi Buta which stand side by side on the road from Palnar to Jabeli; the large stone outside the Palnar bazaar with the sheltered grave beside it in memory of Markami Bandi; a recently placed Hemla stone at Marnda; the rows of Marvi stones between Borgum and Potali; the rows of stones for the Marvi and Sori clans at Pariya. A great forest of upright menhirs, as at Muspari (where there are over three hundred and sixty) is a strange and inspiring sight. So are the mighty stones of the Dantewara hills, those gaunt memorials of the dead which yet preserve no memories—for the names of the dead are forgotten in two generations; but I have always found the *danyakal* stones peculiarly dignified and impressive.

These stones seem only to be placed by the Bison-horn Maria; I have found them neither among the Hill Maria nor the Ghotul Muria.

Hutton has referred to the megalithic culture of the Maria as 'now apparently rapidly decaying.'<sup>3</sup> It is true that in certain areas the stones are no longer erected, but over the bulk of the country under review the

1. Grigson, op. cit., p. 277.

2. Grigson, op. cit., p. 281.

3. J. H. Hutton, *Introduction* to Grigson, op. cit., p. xv

practice is still vigorously maintained, and I saw dozens of newly erected menhirs in my travels between 1939 and 1942.

Among the Hill Maria the custom has fallen into disuse in the Bhairamgarh Mar, in most of the Chota Dongar Pargana and in all the area round Barsur—a centre of detribalization stronger even than Jagdalpur.<sup>1</sup> Grigson describes how from Ader in the Chota Dongar Pargana 'rows of menhirs will be met by the traveller at Itulnar in Bhairamgarh Mar, between Itulnar and Hikul in Barsur Mar, and at Toinar and other villages in the latter Pargana; but the clans now occupying these areas do not erect menhirs, and say that the rows still standing were erected ages ago by clans no longer known.'<sup>2</sup> But all over the north and centre of the Abujmar the custom holds its ancient sway.

It is not easy to generalize about the Bison-horn Maria. In the country round Gidam and Barsur, many clans that follow the megalithic tradition vigorously elsewhere have abandoned the practice, though the Barse and Kalmu and Kunjami clans continue it and erected twenty-six menhirs within the limits of the Gidam revenue circle in the five years 1938-42. In the Jagdalpur Tahsil, though the custom is less well maintained here than elsewhere, the Poyami, Vetti, Bekor, Kuhrami, Marvi, Padami and Muchaki at least continue to erect *uraskal* stones, and probably many other clans do so also in different places. Near Jagdalpur, however, and in the neighbourhood of Paknar, there has been some decline. Even in Dantewara, some clans in certain areas now put forked sticks of the *sāja*, cotton or teak trees instead of the stones.

The Jhoria Muria continue the practice fairly generally, and so do the other Ghotul Muria of Narayanpur Tahsil and west Kondagaon. As we move east, however, and come more and more into the midst of Muria whose ancestors migrated south from the Central Provinces the megalithic tradition tends to disappear, though it survives here and there, as we shall see, in curious and interesting forms.

Why is the custom so widespread, so reasonable and so harmless to mankind have disappeared in the areas I have mentioned? The answer is not an easy one. Sometimes there is an actual difficulty in getting stones, as at Mokhpal, and Maria naturally do not care to transport great slabs of rock across great distances. The reason most commonly given is expense. This is probably true, for the cost of erecting a menhir is considerable. A great feast has to be given; one or more cows must be sacrificed, and perhaps pigs and chickens as well; large quantities of rice-beer and *mahua* spirit must be provided; and the carriers of the stone, who may number as many as thirty, must be properly rewarded. Grigson, however, thinks that the question of expense is not the real reason, pointing out that the Bison-horn Maria at all events spend a great deal of money on their marriages; he suggests that the real reason is contact with Hinduism 'with its veneration of the cow.'<sup>3</sup> This may be true of a few villages near Jagdalpur or Dantewara or of those Maria who have come under the strong influence of the Palace or the cult of Danteshwari. But I believe that in spite of ardent denials to officials and visitors, beef is still eaten from one end of Bastar to the other. In fact, there is evidence that the last few years have seen a revival of beef-eating. In any case, where a forked stick takes the place of the menhir, the fork is intended as a holder over which the tail of the cow should be hung: a cow is sacrificed whether there is a menhir or not.

It is more likely, certainly along the main roads, and in the neighbourhood of Barsur and Dantewara that there is a desire to imitate the Hindu custom of erecting elaborate tombs for the dead. Many of these may now be seen, with a small shelter over them, and a pot hanging above.

The break-up of the clan system, according to which in the old days the country was divided into definite clan areas, each with a central shrine for

1. In the Basur Pargana only the Barse clan continue to erect *uraskal*, at Roje and Kasauli.

2. Grigson, op. cit., p. 276.

3. Grigson, op. cit., p. 280.

the clan-god and one central place for the erection of all the menhirs of the clan, has been an important factor. The clans now are so scattered and their *bhum* or territory is so divided up that many Bison-horn Maria do not even know the name of their clan-god or where he lives. The menhirs are no longer erected at the spiritual capital of the clan *bhum*, but are often placed in the village where the dead man used to live. I will return to this point immediately; it will be sufficient to say now that the break-up of any form of organization is likely to cause a parallel decline in custom.

A final cause of the abandonment of the *bhum* system is to be found in the occasional warnings of the priests. In a village in the heart of an area where these customs flourish uninterrupted—no menhirs are erected now because once when the village was overwhelmed by an epidemic, the Siraha declared that it was because the village goddess was annoyed by the practice. The Telami clan have abandoned the custom in the Dhurli area because once when they were quarrying a slab of stone to serve as a menhir, a snake wriggled out of the crack, and this was taken as a sign of the divine displeasure.

## XIII

## THE MENHIR AND THE CLAN

In the old days, the whole of aboriginal Bastar was probably partitioned out among the different clans and tribes, each of which had its own particular *bhum* or clan territory. In each *bhum* there was a spiritual capital called the Pen-rawar, where the clan-god or Anga lived, and whither all the members of the clan assembled for the chief festivals of the Anga and brought their dead to mingle them with the dead of the clan. In those days probably the only place where a menhir could be erected was at the headquarters of the clan. This organization has now largely broken down. Among the Hill Maria, however, as Grigson (who has made a special study of this subject) has pointed out, the old tradition survives. But among the Bison-horn Maria the clan members have scattered so widely, the land has been so divided up and the distances are so great that it has been considerably modified. The Ghotul Muria preserve their belief in the Pen-rawar and in the *bhum* of the clan, but they too are widely scattered over a great area and one clan may have several different Pen-rawar. Both Bison-horn Maria and Ghotul Muria are often unable to say where their clan-god lives or who he is. Many of those who know where he is have not visited him for many years.

As a result of the break-up of the old system the menhirs are no longer taken to the capital of the clan territory but are set up in any village where members of the clan have settled in sufficient numbers. For example, the headquarters of the Kalmu clan is at Dugeli. Any members of this clan within a reasonable distance of Dugeli must erect their *washal* at Dugeli and not in their own village, but if they live a very long way off, then they usually erect them on the spot, as, for example, at Satti. You may find memorials of the Sori clan in half a dozen villages from Pogu Bheji to Gogonda.

Yet even among the Ghotul Muria there is a strict rule that the menhirs must be erected on land that is in some sense the *bhum* of the clan. It may not be the original *bhum*, but it is the *bhum* that has been adopted by the clan as a result of immigration and settlement. This is still a live enough custom to excite serious quarrels. It was a dispute over the erection of menhirs that began the deadly feud between the sorcerer Singlu and Almer village. Most of the people at Almer belong to the Kaudo clan, which erects its menhirs at Karka, home of the clan-god. But Singlu is a Karanga. One day he said to the Gaita, Gurju, of Almer, 'Let me erect *kotokal* in your village; then my ancestors will live here and will help me and my family.' But the Gaita said, 'The proper place for your *kotokal* is at Kokori; make yours there too. If you bring your ancestors to this village, our gods will be neglected.' And he refused to give him any *bhum*. From this arose a long series of calamities.

There was a similar contest at Bandopal. The *bhum* here also belongs to the Kaudo clan and they have erected a number of menhirs. Then came the Gaude folk saying, 'You give us your daughters; give us also a share of your *bhum*.' This led to many quarrels and a long dispute, but at last the Kaudo people agreed to give a place for the Gaude clan to erect its *hotokal* and they made a Gaude man the priest. But the chief Gaita remained a Kaudo. The Kaudo folk, however, were dissatisfied with the arrangement and began to erect their menhirs at Karka where their clan-god was. And after all, the Gaude people found that they could not afford the expense of *hotokal* and so gave back the land to the Kaudo again.

The association of the dead with the clan-god is seen not only in the custom of erecting menhirs in the clan-*bhum* and the use of an expression like *pen-hanāl*, but also in the Muria practice of taking the *jiwa* from the house to the Hanalkot which is always connected with one special clan. This was clearly illustrated at Phunder, where an earthen pot, full of rice, hangs above the Anga of the Maravi clan. When any member of the clan dies, the mourners take his *jiwa* here, sprinkle the blood of a sacrificed chicken above the clan-pot, and thus leave the soul of the dead with his clan ancestors. Once a year, at the first New Eating ceremony, the Gaita removes the pot and changes the rice in the name of the Departed.

## XIV

## THE QUARRY

Among Maria and Muria, there are special hills and forests where each clan gets its wood or stone both for memorials to the dead and for the clan-gods. For example, at Paria the Sori clan brings its *danyakal* stones from the Wiskimeta, the Hill of the Dead. At Kokori, the Netami bring their stones from Chapa-dongri, the Maravi from Mahadeo-dongri. The Kalo clan of the Ghotul Muria village of Mahurpat used to fetch their *hotokal* stones from Boga in Kanker State. One of their ancestors, they say, turned into stone on a hill near this place: they stole the stone and since then have been known as Kalo (*kal* is a stone). But in some places I have seen the quarries actually within the village boundary, as at Dhurli and Dugeli.

When the Bison-horn Maria decide to quarry out a stone, they offer *kosra* millet and broken egg-shells to the *Bhum* (Earth). 'O Mother Earth,' they say, 'Do not trouble us; we are giving you *kosra* and egg-shells in place of the stone we are taking from you.' They then trace the pattern they desire to cut with water or a soup made of *hirwa*<sup>1</sup> pulse on the stone and pile logs and branches above it. They fire these and when the stone is hot enough they again pour water along the desired line, and break it with their digging-sticks. When it is sufficiently cracked, they prise the slab out with poles and digging-sticks.

Sometimes an old man, anxious about his future fame and to ensure his ghostly comfort after death, has a stone cut out and laid ready to be set up in his memory, while he is still alive. At Dugeli, Kalmu Muda showed me the stone that he had prepared for his own wife's funeral, though she was well and flourishing at the time.

It is not, of course, always necessary to quarry the stones; the smaller ones are often found as surface boulders, and when people go to the forest for wood or to hunt they keep a look-out for suitable stones. In the north, the Ghotul Muria generally pick up their stones off the ground.

## XV

## METHOD OF ERECTING A MENHIR

*Hill Maria*: Grigson has given a full description of the Hill Maria ceremonies at the erection of a menhir in the Abujhmar Hills and I will summarize his account:

The Maria attach several cross pieces of wood beneath the stone and tie a long thick pole to either side of it. Twenty or thirty bearers

<sup>1</sup> Glycine hispida.

lift the poles on to their shoulders and carry it to the place where the stone is to be erected. From time to time they stop and the heir of the dead man gives them liquor to drink and at least one meal on the way. On arrival the stone is erected under the supervision of the *erramtogh* or the senior wife-clan relative present. After the stone has been placed in its hole and earth and stones rammed round the base, in many places a small cromlech (called *hanāl-garya*) is made at the bottom. The heir of the dead man squats on the ground with his back to the menhir. He takes a chicken and holding its behind his back cuts its throat with the nails of his hand, sprinkles its blood on the cromlech and pushes its body beneath it. Then still with his back to it he makes an offering of grain saying, 'Whether you were killed by magic or the wrath of the clan-god and the Departed or died naturally I know not but now I have put up this menhir for you and you must wander no more. Stay here in peace for ever and do not worry us, your descendants.'

Then the heir still with his back to the menhir goes to the nearest pool of water followed by the others present and they wash their arms and legs and return to the village. Here the *erramtogh* sacrifices a cow or pig or both. The cow is sacrificed generally in the room of the heir's house before the Pot of the Departed with the blunt side of an axe-head and the words, 'I sacrifice this in your name; hereafter keep still and do not make trouble for us.' The tuft at the end of the cow's tail is fastened to a loop of cord and they take it to the menhir and place it over its apex. The heir then entertains the whole assembly to a feast of the sacrificed beef and pork and the night ends in dancing and liquor.

In the Kutru Mar they do not erect stones for women and children but leave them flat on the ground. These are always smaller than those put for men<sup>1</sup>.

*Muria*: The Jhoria Muria of the Abujhmar foothills follow the Hill Maria customs, as do many of the other Ghotul Muria of the north-central plateau, but among these the *chelik* and *motiāri* of the village dormitory escort the stone to its place with their drums and dances. In the Paralkot area when an old man dies, an *akomāma* relative dances with an axe over his shoulder in front of the stone and the boys and girls follow with their drums. In Phulpar they said that on this occasion, which here they called *kal-ursana* (stone-burying), an *akomāma* relative beats the *hamur dhol* or death-drum in front of the house of the dead, dancing and singing, 'You are dead, to-day we will devour your wealth with pleasure.'

I will give an actual example of the procedure followed at Kehalakot village. Birju Kaudo decided, as a result of dreams which troubled him, to erect a stone in memory of his parents. Stones for this clan have to be brought from a hill called Deo-dongri. He took with him the Gaita of the Hichami clan which stands in the *akomāma* relationship to the Kaudo clan, for it is the rule that the removal of the stone must be performed by a member of such a clan. The Gaita made a *chok*-pattern in front of the stone and offered liquor, pulse and rice, then dug it up. At first they could not get it out of the ground and the Gaita declared that the dead man was annoyed about something and they offered a black chicken to appease him. Once they had got the stone out of the ground they placed it on a specially prepared litter, covered it with fresh cloth and brought it to the *bhum* of the Kaudo clan, being careful not to take it through any village on the way.

As they brought it near, the dead man's sister and daughters stopped them, standing in a line across the path, and demanded rings. Birju gave them a rupee to purchase rings in the bazaar. The Hichami Gaita then dug the hole and they put a *sāja* leaf in the bottom and the stone above it. Soon afterwards a second stone was brought for Birju's mother and this was placed separately, for it is the rule that the memorials for men and women should not usually be together; though this rule, like all rules, is often broken. Then they bathed the stones and put a *gappa* basket with roots and rice in front

<sup>1</sup> I. Grigson, op. cit., pp. 276 ff.

of the woman's stone and a dish in front of the man's. Then everyone present put a mark (just as they might have done at a marriage to the bride and bridegroom) of oil and *haldi* on the stones. They returned home and sacrificed a bullock and tied the tail to the old man's menhir. On this occasion the *jiwa* of the deceased were brought back to the Hanal-kurma or the House of the Dead, which stands in the village itself.

The cow or bullock is often chosen by old people while they are still alive. Widows, who may reasonably expect to be neglected, are insistent on dedicating an animal for sacrifice, for it then cannot be put to other uses.

*Bison-horn Maria*: The Bison-horn Maria trace the origin of the practice of erecting *uraskal* either (as I was told by Oyami Handa of Bara Har-mamunda) to the first man who ever lived and who returned after his death to instruct his sons in what they ought to do, or (as I was told in Tikanpal) to the following incident.

In former days when the Maria did not eat beef or erect *uraskal*, a certain man died and a few people were watching the corpse inside the house. Presently the watchers fell into a deep sleep. The corpse got up and walking over to where the cattle were, took one of the cows with an axe. He placed a stone on the ground and cut off the cow's tail and tied it to the stone. He removed the liver and sat down to eat it. When the sleepers awoke and found the corpse missing they ran out and saw the man eating the liver. But before they could reach him he returned to his resting-place and became again a corpse.

The customs attending the bringing of a menhir in the Bison-horn Maria country differ somewhat from those among the Hill Maria. Here the sister's son plays a leading part. Led by him a party of three drummers and a boy beating a gong and twenty or thirty men go out to the quarry where the stone has already been cut out or to some hill where a suitable rock has been observed. The sister's son touches the stone and addresses the dead man. 'In your name,' he says, 'we are bringing this stone; let it be light, let not the burden be too heavy.' They place poles above and below the stone and two or three above it, lashing them together with rope made of the camel's-foot creeper. If the stone is very heavy, additional poles may be put across it so that more bearers may support it. Then the sister's son with a drum in his hand climbs on to the stone and begins to drum with a new rhythm which goes *gul-gucha, gul-gucha, gul-gucha*. Some twenty men lift up the stone whistling loudly, *soor-soor-who-who* and swing it to and fro. Then they move towards the place where the menhir is to be erected, the drummers dancing and drumming in front, the sister's son beating his drum above. From time to time they put their burden on the ground and rest, and the sister's son has to give them rice-beer or mahua liquor. As they are being given their refreshment the sister's son sacrifices a cock. He holds it by its legs and offers it a little oil in a leaf-cup asking the cause of death. He goes on reciting every possible cause and when the cock puts its beak into the oil he hits its head against the drum and so kills it.

When the party brings the stone to the hole that has been prepared for it, the drummers throw the castor-sticks which they have been using hitherto on to the pyre, and take new sticks, which may be made of any kind of wood. Before the stone is erected the Gaita addresses the dead, 'You are dead and you must forget your father, your mother, your brother and your family. This is your house. Live here and do not trouble us or our pigs and cattle. We are giving you rice and pulse and everything that you had at home, so that you may be satisfied.'

In the hole which has been dug by the sister's son, the relatives put something or other, rice, small coins, rings or ornaments, whatever they can afford. In Tumakpal, I was told, once the female relations of an old man threw bangles, beads and necklaces worth at least ten rupees into the hole. The poorer people, however, put into it bits of bark or even grass.

1. At Koriras they said that all the drummers and gong-beaters sat on the stone:



Then the bearers untie the stone from its poles and all push and lift it into position. Earth and stones are rammed round the bottom and a small cromlech is placed in front. On this stone offerings are made by the sister's son with his back to the menhir in much the same way as in the Abujmar Hills. The women of the household come and put cooked rice and *haldi* in leaf-cups on the cromlech, and pour upon it grain, roots or anything that the dead man used to like when he was alive.

Then the whole party returns to the house and one or more cows are sacrificed. These were probably selected by the dead man during his lifetime. The cow is tied to a tree and the sister's son first feeds the animal with rice and then knocks it over the head with the blunt end of an axe. If more than one cow is killed, the others may be killed by anyone. They remove the liver and cut it in pieces. Rice is prepared in the house of the dead and divided into four portions. The liver is divided into twelve and one portion of rice and three portions of liver are put into each of four leaf-cups. Then these cups, with the tail of the sacrificed cow and a pot of rice-beer, are carried out in a specially-made basket to the menhir. One portion is put on the ground for Mother Earth and the rest for the dead man on the cromlech. The tail is hung over the menhir and the beer poured upon it. At the same time a little beer must be offered to the old menhirs. If this is omitted the ancient dead will be angry and will quarrel with the new spirit that has gone to join them.

They all go to bathe and then return home for the funeral feast either by the bank of a stream or at the house. On this day only the relatives by marriage eat the beef; if members of the household took it they would feel 'as if they were eating their father's own flesh.' After a week, the relatives by marriage should repay hospitality by bringing beef for the household. The drummers have to sit apart and are given separate food. There is often a diversion caused when somebody standing in a joking relationship to the sister's son goes off with one of the shoulders of the dead cow. He suddenly springs out on the sister's son and knocks him over with it. This is regarded as very amusing.

Some Maria, not out of any religious taboo but purely from personal taste, eat neither beef nor pork; others do not eat chickens but pigeons; others again are vegetarian. For such people cows are not sacrificed for the menhir (the family may kill a cow for the funeral feast but this is not then offered on the cromlech). Instead, whatever animal or bird was particularly relished by the dead is killed, while for a vegetarian rice cooked in milk is offered.

Rice-beer must be given both to the menhir and to the mourners. It must be made fresh in the room where death occurred and served with a gourd with a long handle that has been specially hollowed out for this purpose. Usually there is no stock of rice-beer at hand and it cannot be made so quickly. The Maria then mix a little *mandia* flour with water and give this instead.

The position of the drummers and the man who beats the gong is peculiar. They must all be related on the female side to the dead. They are regarded as outcasts for the two days of the funeral. They must eat separately, sitting on a separate mat, and food is cooked separately for them. They must not have any beef that day but a cock is killed for them and they are given this with rice, pulse and ghee. They are 'as unclean as Mahara' until they are purified. By the evening of the second day they are regarded as cleansed and are then allowed once again to mix with the people. Why this should be, I do not know.

If for any reason in the course of the ceremony some rite or custom is omitted, the spirit of the dead man may attack one or other of the mourners in order to show his displeasure. For example, at Gadapal, Burka Peda told me that they once forgot to give rice-beer to the old menhirs and the insulted dead attacked his father's sister and she fell down in a fit. They quickly gave both rice-beer and *mahua* liquor to all the menhirs and she

recovered. Again in Mahara-Karka one Kuhrami Eriya was hurled into the fire by the angry ghost and his leg was burnt. If this happens it is a good plan for the victim to run and catch hold of the broken bamboo poles of the bier. The Gaita pours water upon him and the angry ghost leaves him alone.

I once witnessed the erection of a menhir for a girl 'old enough to know how to fetch water' at Massenar. A long line of women, wailing without words but inexpressibly sad, went towards the pyre about ten o'clock in the morning. Away in the jungle on the far side of the road to the village there was a great collection of large and small menhirs and near these was the pyre still smouldering. The women gathered round and wept, saying how good the girl had been and how bitter was her departure. They put two sticks at either end of the pile of ashes and to them tied bits of cloth that had been taken from the corpse the previous day. The winnowing-fan that had been used on the first day to bring rice was now thrown on to the ashes. Two young men, while the women continued weeping, dug a hole with a digging-stick and the rest went away to bring the stone. As it was only a young girl, this was done without much ceremony and the stone was only 6 feet long. They brought it and put it in the hole and the parents poured water and rice-beer upon it and then offered beer to the menhirs of their ancestors. On a small stone at the foot of the menhir they put rice, pulse, beans and 'whatever grows in the fields or is in the house; she was used to these things and if she does not have them she will trouble us.' Later they brought a bullock's tail and tied it round the menhir so that the cattle of the village would prosper. The girl's father distributed the bits of cloth which had been placed on the corpse, throwing them here and there, now to the women, now to the men of *akomāma* clans. This was a very simple ceremony but infinitely pathetic and no one could doubt the genuineness of the sorrow of the people for the girl who had been taken from them out of due time.

## XVI

## THE HANAL-PATA

It is very difficult to persuade the Muria to repeat at any but the proper time any of the songs connected with death. This is quite natural, for there is to all simple minds something dark and ominous about talking of the dead. I have not yet found a Hill Maria who was willing to repeat a single song. It has only been among the more open-hearted and friendly Ghotul Muria that I have been able to get a few songs, mostly in Gondi, which are used during a funeral and at the time of erecting a menhir.

From Sonawal village comes a Halbi song used at the time of quarrying the stone.

You were on the ground, O stone!  
Come now to our house, and see your children.  
Once you were a man,  
Now you are a god (*deo*).  
You were in the grave, O man!  
Today we bring you to your home.  
We will all feast and drink,  
In memory of you.  
Ri ri loyo ri ri loyo!

The next step is to bring the stone to the memorial ground. Here is another Halbi song which can also be used at the time of placing a memorial pillar at the grave.

Harken, brother, harken, brother!  
You were a tree, brother,  
You were a stone, brother,  
You were out on the hillside, brother,  
To-day we remember you.  
Come to your house, brother, for you are growing old.

Come to the granary and live with your family.  
 Limb to limb we will live with you,  
 We will hold each other's arms.  
 Come to the house, come to the granary.  
 We have no knowledge, teach us wisdom.  
 The relatives are sitting, go to the house.  
 The relatives have come in crowds,  
 Though the court is small and narrow.  
 There is not enough rice,  
 How are we to feed our relatives ?  
 There is nothing in the house ;  
 Go brother and give them something.  
 There is not enough curry,  
 Yet thick as *sāl* trees are our relatives.  
 There is liquor from twelve stills,  
 Yet there is not enough for a drink apiece.  
 There are twelve measures of rice,  
 Yet there is not enough to give each visitor a helping.  
 There are five measures of salt, three measures of chillies,  
 Two measures of *haldi*, yet there is not enough.  
 What can we do ? You teach us.  
 Give us food, brother, and then there'll be enough.

This stress on the practical difficulties of entertainment is very typical. As we have seen, many clans have abandoned the practice of erecting men-hirs because of the expense. This song vividly illustrates this tendency. It may be noted that here a situation seems to be visualized in which the *kotokal* stone is erected at the same time that the *jiwa* is brought home to the house.

We now come to songs sung at the actual placing of the stone in position. It is probable that many of these songs are interchangeable ; we must not think of them as carefully organized and arranged as in an English hymnal.

Re re loyo re re la re re loyo re re lā !  
 Re re laita ke ayo ra ayo bāba re re lā !  
 Sixteen, twelve-storied earth,  
 Nine-storied world.  
 Lie down here to rest.  
 We leave you in the forest.  
 We will not be here.

This song, in sharp distinction from its predecessor, lays all the stress on the fact that the soul is to stay in its stone house in the jungle. I will now give another Gondi song used at the erection of a *kotokal*. At the end of each line there is a refrain almost like a sigh—*Ye budha*, O old man !—addressing the dead.

Dance, old man, dance !  
 We have come to see you.  
 Your-sons and daughters have come,  
 Your relatives have come.  
 We've brought some liquor,  
 We've brought it for you.  
 We've come for your ceremonies,  
 To make you happy.  
 Listen, old man, listen.  
 Your body is like the pith of a plantain tree.  
 Your legs are like the fine pillars (of a house).  
 Your chest is like a banyan leaf.  
 Your head is like an owl's.  
 Your face is like a pipal leaf.  
 Your hair is like the *usri* grass.  
 Shake your hair,  
 We haven't come to watch you eat.

Dance full of happiness,  
 We are making a palace for you.  
 Where does your god come from ?  
 The god is from Dhamda.  
 Listen, old man, listen.  
 What is inside the palace ?  
 If there was a golden swing inside,  
 How beautiful it would be.  
 Swing to and fro on the swing,  
 And we will serve you.  
 We will give an offering for you,  
 We will give a black ram for you.  
 (*The dead man speaks*) I won't eat that,  
 I must have the long-tailed one.  
 I will eat that,  
 If you give some incense.  
 Serve me well  
 That I may be well pleased.

'The long-tailed one' mentioned in the song is, of course, a cow. Lanji-Dhamda is the traditional home of many of the northern Muria whence they migrated into Bastar.

I will now give some extracts from a very long chant recorded at Duga Bangal, a Jhoria Muria village in the Abujhmar foothills. The entire song is sung during the bringing and erecting of the stone ; it is interesting to note how closely life and love and death are intermingled in Muria thought, which regards them as a single process. The bulk of this long Hanal-pata is indeed about life, and only at the tragic end do the singers discourse of death.

The song begins with some sententious lines about the universality of death.

Sixteen-storied world,  
 Nine-storied earth !  
 Here is the island of mankind ;  
 Here all die.  
 Men, ants, worms, animals are here.  
 Bhagavan has made them,  
 He has made them all.  
 See with the eyes,  
 Walk with the feet,  
 Work with the hand,  
 Talk with the mouth.  
 So has Bhagavan ordained,  
 So provided in this world.  
 Here men quarrel,  
 Here men laugh,  
 Here is virtue,  
 Here is sin.  
 In this world  
 Live royalty.  
 Here are the *samdhi*,  
 Here too are the brother-clans.

After this introduction, which has obvious Hindu elements, the story describes the engagement, the romance and the marriage of the son of Nirabosi Usendi and Nerum Taro, daughter of Kamragatti Dhurwa. The tale is vividly and charmingly told, and at some length, but there is no need to give it here. The marriage rouses Nerum Taro's father to fury, for his permission was not obtained, and from his rage comes tragedy.

Old man Kamragatti said, 'Who took away my daughter ?'  
 He ground his teeth as if his mouth were full of pulse.  
 When he heard that Nirabosi Usendi had taken his daughter,  
 He sent an arrow saying, 'Let Nirabosi Usendi die !'

He sent an arrow of fire and snapped his fingers.  
 Thus died Nirabosi Usendi and his wife.  
 His son wept *sirk-sirk*.  
 All the village gathered there.  
 The boy and his relatives and they came.  
 The brother-clans and the wife-clans gathered.  
 Laughing, the relatives by marriage were beating drums.  
 They buried them both and made a tomb.  
 All the *akomāma* went away.  
 The son of Nirabosi said,  
 'Come on Wednesday and we will do the *gatganga* rite.  
 On that day we will erect a stone or post.'  
 They greeted him and went away.  
 Those who brought cocks gave cocks, those who brought goats  
 gave goats.  
 The *akomāma* cooked the goats and pigs.  
 On the fixed day the visitors came.  
 The dead man's soul was in a *sāja* leaf.  
 The *akomāma* cooked the food to give to the dead man.  
 When it was ready they carried a little to the cross-roads.  
 They called the soul to eat it.  
 They offered gruel and rice in the name of the dead man.  
 The boys and girls danced with their *dol* drums.  
 They cut a *sāja* tree and put it as a post.  
 The soul came there and that is the house of the dead.  
 The *akomāma* went to bring a stone;  
 They went to the Hill of Panthers for a stone.  
 Some took a cot and some took poles to carry it.  
 The *akomāmā* brought the stone,  
 They brought it to the place where they had put the wooden post.  
 The *akomāma* saw the place and said, 'This is a good place.'  
 Thinking thus they dug a hole;  
 They dug two holes with digging-sticks;  
 There they put the stones of the dead (*hanāl kalk*).  
 From the *sāja* tree the dead came to the stones.  
 They put *halde* and oil on the stones.  
 Those who brought cowries gave cowries; those who brought  
 money gave money.  
 Those who brought rupees gave rupees; those who brought dishes  
 gave dishes.  
 Those who brought pots gave pots; those who brought cloth gave  
 cloth.  
 All these things the *akomāma* took away.  
 Thus they finished the work of the stones of the dead.  
 'Come, *akomāma* come, let us eat in the house!  
 Then came from the dead man's house  
 Old men and old women, boys and girls.  
 They feasted the boys of many villages.  
 The boys went away and they fed the relatives with gruel.  
 For putting a stone for a dead man, this much only.  
 The dead man's bazaar is not a small bazaar;  
 On a Saturday, on that day, was the bazaar.  
 There was a king of the dead,  
 He was a great man.  
 That king made ready to go to the bazaar.  
 His queen also was ready to go to the bazaar.

All these songs have one thing in common—the stress that is laid on the  
 details of ritual and relationship, and on the practical duties and expenses  
 of conducting a funeral or memorial service. They are also largely innocent  
 of poetry. But they are important documents; they establish rite and

custom in a form that is easily remembered and constantly repeated ; so long as the songs continue the customs will not die.

## XVII

## GENERAL IDEAS ABOUT THE MENHIRS

There is a universal belief that the memorial stones grow in size if the spirit of the dead is satisfied with the arrangements that are made for him. I have on several occasions spoken to the Muria of the north (who make very much smaller stones than in the south) of the great *waskal* of the Bison-horn Maria. They invariably reply, 'But, of course, these stones are very old and they have grown ; they could never have put up such big ones.' They believe that even the small stones of the north will grow in time. Kodu, a very intelligent Muria landlord of Khutgaon in the extreme north of the State, told me that in the past twenty years, he has definitely seen the stones grow in size. A very small stone is put for a baby and it is believed that it will grow gradually until it has reached the size it should have been had it been placed for a man of twenty.

When a stone grows it is considered fortunate. There is sure to be happiness and good luck for the family. If a stone falls down or goes crooked, the relatives consult the Siraha and then put it straight and offer whatever sacrifices he recommends. It is generally supposed that when a stone falls, it is an indication that the ghost of the dead is angry or feels neglected. In some places, the collapse of a menhir is regarded as prophetic of disaster, and generally should white-ants make a nest over the stone it is considered a bad omen. But in some places there is a belief that there is no need to worry about this after twenty years have passed. After twenty years the Departed has become completely mingled with his ancestors and no longer exists as a separate entity. When an old stone falls down, therefore, they do not perform any ceremonies and leave it where it is.

Only in one village, at Mokhpal, have I found scepticism about this. In this place, the Maria laughed at the idea that the stones could change their size and said that if, for example, they grew smaller it was simply because the ground was damp and the stones sank into it.

## XVIII

## SUBSTITUTES FOR THE MENHIR

In those places where the megalithic culture of the people has weakened or has disappeared, what substitutes are there? The Hill Maria often, immediately after the funeral, build a small cairn about two feet high known as the *marma-kal*. This is simply a pile of stones with a flat cap-stone, on the top of which the relatives and other householders offer a little rice or millet to the dead. In some areas this cairn is called *kork-kotihtana-kal* or 'chicken-feeding stone' and in many cases, especially where the family is poor, this *marma-kal* cairn has to take the place of a menhir. Grigson says that in the Chota Dongar Pargana, where the menhirs are no longer erected, a cow or pig is nevertheless sacrificed in the village on the night after the funeral at the heir's house and portions of the flesh or liver, when cooked, are placed under the cromlech at the base of the *hanāl-gatta* post or even on the grave, while the tail (and sometimes also a lower leg, from hock to hoof) is fastened by a cord from an overhanging *sāja* bough<sup>1</sup>.

Similar cairns are sometimes made by the Bison-horn Maria for people who have died far away in the Tea Gardens of Assam or in the jail at Jagdalpur. There is a large cairn in memory of Sori Suklu at Surnar. He died in Assam and after his clothes and ornaments had been cremated, the cairn was made.

In the Bhairamgarh Mar the Maria and related tribes put wooden pillars at the top of which are carved representations of birds. I have seen these in several villages near the Indravaty River and at Borga on the way up to the hills. It has been suggested that the birds carved on these pillars are

<sup>1</sup> Grigson, op. cit., p. 279.

peacocks, but there is nothing to indicate this. It is more likely that they represent pigeons and other birds such as are carved on the top of the more elaborate *mundé* pillars. There is no special association of peacocks with the dead in Bastar.

The most common substitute for the memorial stone is a forked wooden pole placed on or near the grave. The Bison-horn Maria put these posts in position on the day after the funeral and the fork is used to hold the tail of the sacrificed cow. Grigson says that these pillars are 'always cut from the sacred *sāja* tree'<sup>1</sup>, but my own experience has been that though the *sāja* is used sometimes, much more common is the *semur*<sup>2</sup> tree. In some villages the Patabi clan only use teak, which is used also by the Solami clan in the Dubatota area to the south. In the Chote Tumnar area they use *mahua* wood.



MEMORIAL POST WITH BIRD  
CARVED ON THE TOP NEAR  
BORGIA

When such a pole is erected much the same ceremonies are performed. The sister's son squats with his back to the pole and sacrifices a chicken, and they make the usual offerings to the dead in front of it. I have already given a full description of this in my account of the funeral at Penta.

Among the Ghotul Muria also these memorial poles are erected, though with certain differences of ritual. At Modenga the Muria described how they made a small bundle of straw with rice inside it called *dussir* for a man and a small bamboo basket (*gappa*) for a woman. They put marks of *haldi* and oil as at a marriage to the wooden pillar and some also to both the baskets and give them to the sister or daughter of the dead. The girl has to take these to the house and from that day has to worship Lagar Pen who comes to the house then. Every three years thereafter she must offer a pig to Lagar Pen. If she has given birth to a male child in the interval a male pig will be sacrificed, and if a girl has been born a female pig.

It is generally said that the erection of the wooden pillar and the application of oil and *haldi* to it represents the second wedding of the dead. Here the pillar is usually made of *sāja*. At Phauda the Muria described how the *sāja* branch must be cut by a member of an *akomāma* clan after he has offered rice, pulse and liquor to it saying, 'I am going to take you in honour of the dead.' He covers it with a new cloth and ties it round with a string seven times, turning the pillar round and round. After it has been put in position, the ground in front is cow-dunged and three circles of flour are made. A pot of water is placed in the central circle and the Gaita says to the pillar, 'Now I will take you home.' A representative of the dead man's family makes a mark on it with *haldi* oil and offers a little rice and a copper coin. Only the one representative of the bereaved family does this, though all the members of the wife-clans do so. They sacrifice two chickens and offer liquor to the pillar and go home. They kill a bullock and come back with the tail and tie this to the pillar saying, 'I have now given you everything,

<sup>1</sup> Grigson, op. cit., p. 282.

<sup>2</sup> *Bombax malabaricum*, D. C.

don't bother us or put us to any loss.' The mourner carries the pot of water back to the house of the dead man and places it near the Pot of the Departed. They offer it liquor and ask the dead man always to remain there and live together happily with the other ancestors.

In many parts of Bastar the custom of making fairly elaborate tombs is coming into being. Bison-horn Maria tombs may be seen on the roadside near Aranpur and along the road from Dantewara to Barsur, especially in the neighbourhood of Ghotpal. These tombs are built up with a series of steps and are then plastered and whitewashed. A roof is erected above them and sometimes a pot is hung from the roof full of water which leaks out through a small hole onto the tomb in order to keep the dead man cool. These tombs are made whether the deceased has been cremated or buried and are more in the nature of memorials than anything else. In most cases when a carved memorial pillar is made, a tomb is put beside it. If a carved pillar is not made, then a pole of *sāja* or bombax is put beside the tomb and the tail of a sacrificed cow is hung upon it. Decorations on the tomb are purely conventional. Figures of men and women, birds or bullocks are made in mud.

The Ghotul Muria sometimes make well decorated graves. I saw one very interesting grave at Gudripara. An old man named Maria, a Muria of the Poyami sept died in February 1940. He had cleared the jungle with his own hands, established the village, planted mango trees, founded the ghotul, ruled the community as its headman for many years. So although his *bhumiyār* would normally be at Kokameta, the villagers made a tomb for him in his own village. It was built exactly a year after his death, in February 1941. Since Bhagavan had taken his spirit, a '*Bhagavan-diya*' or lamp was placed on the top. All round were relics of the dead man—cloth tied to sticks, traps, baskets, pots, spoons, a bow and arrows. Most interesting of all was the small menhir placed in front of the tomb. Here met in one place Maria, Gond and Hindu customs.

In Phunder I visited an elaborate tomb for a very old man, Rai Singh Thakur, a Ghotul Muria, who died in 1937. On the top of the tomb was an earthenware horse with an image of the dead man riding upon it and an elaborate trident. Rai Singh's son, Nergu Marabi, gave a small bullock to the Kumhar for making the horse and another bull to a Lohar for making the trident. As the dead man was a great drinker, his son and grandsons regularly offer liquor at his grave.

But the most common substitute for the memorial pillar is simply nothing at all. The graveyards and cremation grounds of the Muria and Muria dead are sad and pathetic witnesses to the vanity of human hopes and ambitions. There may be a ring attached to a tree; you may see a few stones and logs upon the grave; sometimes there are pots or poles at the four corners; there may be a decorated spire (as at Binjli), or an iron lampstand (as at Phunder) in the centre. Nearby are a few bits of grave furniture, a baby's cradle, some simple toys, cooking-pots for women, traps or baskets for men. But by none of these can a man's name be preserved. A few seasons wash them with their rains, a bear or hyena digs up the ground. Only the memorial stone can survive for even a few years the chances of mortal life.

#### XIX

#### THE MEMORIAL PILLAR

Among the Bison-horn Maria (but not other tribes) when a well-known or wealthy man dies his family sometimes erects a carved wooden pillar to his memory. There are very few of these pillars, though the custom of making them is far from moribund, but the expense is great and only the most important people are considered worthy of them. To have a carved pillar in your memory is the Maria equivalent of being buried in Westminster Abbey.

These pillars are called by Grigson *urasgatta*, a word that is obviously formed on the same plan as *uraskal*, from *urasana* meaning 'to bury'.



and *gatta*—‘a pillar.’ I have not myself found any Maria using the word or even recognizing it when it has been put to them. It may be that its use has died out. The Maria to whom I have spoken call the pillars either *munde* or *kambha*.

A pillar is usually erected near a highway—not necessarily a motorable one. It should simply be near any road or path that is constantly used by the people. It is usually made of *sāja* or *sarail* wood and is erected with ceremonies very similar to those for a stone.

As far as I know, the pillars are usually made by non-aboriginals, but the Maria give their instructions to the carpenter about the patterns they want carved. For example, a pillar in memory of Kopa Dhurwa at Massenar was made by Bharto, an Oriya carpenter of Jagdalpur. The pillars for Barse Marka at Barrem and for Marvi Masa at Jabeli were both made by Anda Kalar of Potali. For making Barse Marka's pillar at Barrem, his sister's son gave one bull-calf worth twenty rupees, cloth worth five rupees, two rupees in cash and daily food while the carpenter was working. The pillar took fifteen days to make.

Since these pillars rapidly decay with time, it is worth while giving a description of some of them, for even though the Maria do not themselves do the actual work of carving, the conception is their's.

There is a very fine pillar to a wealthy Maria named Muchaki Hunga of Katakanda near Dilmilli on the main road from Jagdalpur to Dantewara. It is a fat, thick pillar, carefully squared, standing some 15 feet high with elaborate carvings round the base and a decoration of crocodiles and pigeons at the top. The whole is surmounted by a trident, obviously suggested by the carpenter, on the top of which again is a small bird. On the west face of the pillar there are carvings of Bison-horn dancers and six girls who are realistically provided with breasts and genitalia. Below this there is a tiger, a crane and a peacock. On the south side is a picture of the dead man riding on an elephant, carrying an umbrella, an axe and bags of money and then five women with pots of rice-beer and spoons. Below them are rats. At the foot are men ploughing, deer and tigers. On the east side is a man riding on a horse, and horses, fish and a tortoise. To the north is a man and wife with children and a gourd for taking rice-beer from a pot and drawings of snakes and birds. Below this are two pairs of dogs copulating and at the very bottom some men are carrying a pot of rice-beer.

Near the pillar is a grave built up in the modern Hinduized fashion and protected by a little shed.

Near Massenar at the end of a long line of *waskal* menhirs is the famous pillar in memory of Kopa Dhurwa. This is much more slender than the one at Dilmilli and is not so well-carved. Here we have carvings of Kopa himself riding on an elephant with an umbrella, a gun and a tobacco pouch. On his chest is a small circle which I was told represented his Jubilee Medal. On other parts of the pillar there are men dancing with their Bison-horn head-dress, boys and girls dancing with a pot of rice-beer, scenes of a man trying to drag away a girl by the hand, and various drawings of crocodiles, porcupines, peacocks, tigers and fish. The carpenter has put in a carving of Hanuman, but the Maria know nothing of this and think that it is a policeman inserted to emphasize Kopa's dignity.

This pillar also has, or once had, pigeons on the top and there is a trident, though again the Maria are ignorant of its meaning. They said, ‘It is the pole's turban; it is made of iron to save us the trouble of renewing it.’

Beside the road from Palnar to Jabeli there stands a pillar in memory of Marvi Masa who was sentenced for transportation for life for murdering his elder cousin. He died in jail after five years. He was a well-known man, both Siraha and Waddai for the neighbourhood, and elaborate arrangements were made to preserve his memory. It is worth noting that nothing was done for the man whom he murdered. His pillar stands beside a very large *danyakal* stone, also put in his memory, and a mound of earth covered

by a small shed which contains the cloth and ornaments which were brought back from the jail and buried there. The carvings on the pillar are not very good but they are interesting. On all four sides at the bottom is Masa himself as a Siraha sitting on a swing. On the south side he holds a trident on his head; on the east side he has a sword in either hand; on the north he is holding a large sacrificial spoon and on the west he is swinging to and fro. In each case a sort of streamer from his head indicates the flowing locks and untidy hair of the Siraha.

On the very top of the pillar is a large *pidha* seat with four pigeons on it and above that another seat with three pigeons (one of them has probably fallen off).

The designs on each side of the pillar are as follows; in each case they are from top to bottom. On the south side an elephant with Masa on its back, bullocks, Masa riding a horse, two women with plainly marked breasts and vaginal, *pharsa* axes, a comb, a pigeon and tigers. On the east side there is an elephant, a monkey, birds, *godel* axes, swords, a *banda* knife, a *kaser* knife, a chital stag. On the north side is an elephant, the sun and moon, horses, fish, a *barasinga*, bullocks and two men carrying a pot of rice-beer. On the west side is Masa on an elephant, bullocks, two women, tortoises, a cow with a realistically carved udder, bullocks and a bird. It was after seeing this pillar that Chipra Dhurwa had the pillar at Massenar made for his father, Kopa Dhurwa.

Almost exactly the same is the pillar at Barrem for Barse Marka, but here the pillar stands at the end of a row of *uraskal* stones instead of beside a *danyakal*.



MEMORIAL PILLAR FOR BARSE MARKA AT THE END OF  
A ROW OF URASKAL AT BARREM

There is a very old pillar near Killepal on the main road to Dantewara from Jagdalpur, almost hidden in the surrounding jungle. There are elaborate decorations of chevrons and lozenges with a few carvings of

elephants, a horse and a tiger. Grigson gives a photograph of a pillar on the way to Chitrakot, but I think this must have fallen, for I have not been able to find it. I am told that there are other pillars at Lalaguda, at Bandakot near Sirisguda, at Taragaon, at Kumalnar and one at Garda which has fallen down.

I have noticed three new pillars which have been erected recently.<sup>1</sup> One was at Chinger in the Barsur area put up in memory of an important member of the Lekhami clan. It is a simple wooden pillar standing out in the jungle by the path: three rows of lozenges are cut in the wood near the top and a single pigeon is seated above. It was still red with oil mixed with *geru*, probably paint issued for use in the Census operations. At its foot was a flat stone supported on two others, the *hanāl-garya*. From the top there hung a strip of cloth, possibly a bit of the dead man's dancing-dress.

At Bara Arapur there is a new pillar with very little carving but having three pigeons and a notice-board giving the particulars of the death of a young Maria who was killed by a wild bison. When I saw this pillar it was still freshly covered with whitewash and two red flags were flying from the top. There was a mud platform at the foot and a few pots and leaf-cups that had been used at the erection ceremony were lying near.

It is important to notice that these pillars are closely associated with the megalithic culture of the Maria. Sometimes both a menhir and a pillar are erected; sometimes the pillar stands at the end of a row of stone monuments. It is not, therefore, in any sense a substitute for the *uraskal* but a supplement to it.

It is tempting to suppose that the various animals and birds carved on the pillar have some totemic significance, but I doubt if this is so. In the first place, there are far too many animals and in the second the people themselves say that they simply represent the ordinary objects of the chase and are carved there to indicate some of the interests of the dead man. Each pillar in fact attempts to be a biography in wood of the deceased. We see him important carrying the symbols of wealth and power and riding on a horse or elephant; we see the dancers that delighted him and the pot of rice-beer which never failed to give him pleasure. We are shown the knives and axes that he used; the animals that he saw or hunted in the forest. I imagine that we should have been shown more of his agricultural interests had the skill of the carpenter been adequate to carving even a plough or a cart of rice. On the other hand, the predominance of hunting scenes may suggest where the real interest of the Maria lies.

## XX

### REMNANTS OF MEGALITHIC CULTURE IN EAST KONDAGAON

Throughout their entire territory the Ghotul Muria preserve some form of megalithic culture, but this grows less and less prominent as you move towards the east. The Jhoria Muria and the Muria of the northern Parganas, as well as many villages in the central area almost up to the main Keskal-Jagdulpur road, still erect stones of average size with ceremonies closely resembling those of the Hill Maria. For some reason, however, they rarely put these stones by the roadside and the traveller therefore does not see them. When we cross the road and move east towards the Orissa border, however, the custom of placing large menhirs almost disappears, though some tradition of using stones in memory of the dead survives.

This survival takes several different forms. Sometimes a very small stone is brought and placed on the ground near the Hanalkot or elsewhere; sometimes a single stone is erected for a whole clan; sometimes a stone is combined with a modern tomb.

At Kanhera, when the time comes for performing some ceremony to content the dead, the relatives are summoned and they go to the nearest stream. A representative of the dead man's family and an *akomāma* relative go together into the water while the people on the bank call upon the dead. The two *samāhi* duck under the water and one or other brings up a

<sup>1</sup> This article was written in 1942.

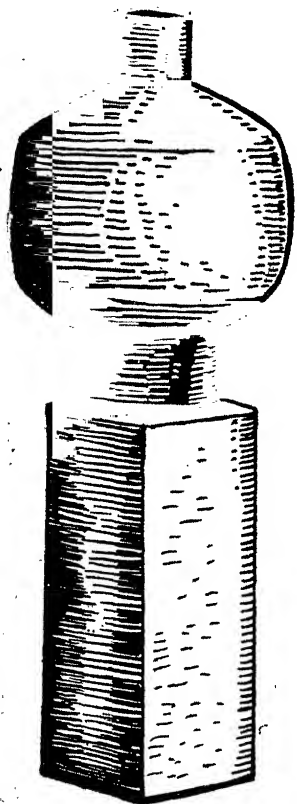
stone or a fish. If it is a fish they put it into the pot and take it home in the ordinary way; if it is a stone they dress it in a new cloth and carry it along till it falls down of its own accord. They bury it there, wherever it may be, put a small marriage crown upon it and anoint it with *haldi*, then go dancing home.

In Bopna village there is a deep pool in a neighbouring stream. When, after some years, there have died three or four people whose spirits must be mingled with their ancestors, the mourners go to this pool and make the usual offerings on the bank. Presently Bara Pen comes on one of the *akomāma* relatives and he goes down into the water calling on the spirits of the dead to draw near. As he takes one name his foot strikes against a stone and he picks it up; he takes another name and again picks up the stone below his feet. He then takes these stones to the Hanalkot (which is underneath a *sāja* tree) and puts them on the ground saying, 'They will go down into the ground of their own accord.' The mourners anoint them with *haldi* and sacrifice a pig, killing it with a rice-husker. It is generally believed, wherever this custom exists, that the stones will bury themselves. Should they remain above the ground it is considered a bad omen.

In other villages the people do not go to the river, but a relative by marriage goes to any part of the jungle where there are a lot of stones and throws rice at them saying, 'Throwing rice upon you I invite you to come.' The next morning he goes again and searches for any stone that may have fallen over during the night. This stone is supposed to contain the soul of the deceased and is taken as a memorial to the Hanalkot. In Kokori they said that when the stone fell over of its own accord, the Siraha offered it liquor and an *akomāma* relative picked it up and carried it 'as if it were a baby' to the Hanalkot. There they covered it with cloth, tied a marriage crown and made the marriage marks of *haldi*, while the *chelik* and *motiāri* danced before it.

In Banjora I found a different tradition. A few days after death the Muria in this village dedicate a pig washing its feet and offering it rice. They then let it wander where it will. If after five years no wild animal has killed it they go into the forest for a memorial stone. When they have found a suitable stone, they sacrifice the pig before it. They anoint the stone with *haldi* and bring it to the Hanalkot where it plants itself in the ground of its own accord.

At Randhna village, the Muria put either a wooden pillar or a stone according to the revelation made to the Siraha in each case. A relative by marriage goes into the jungle to find one or the other. If a stone is indicated he sits down beside it; if a pillar, he cuts the tree, usually a *sāja*, carves it roughly with a large ball on the head, and sits there. Then led by the *motiāri* and *chelik* with their drums, the relatives come singing and dancing



MEMORIAL POST AT RANDHNA  
IN EAST KONDAGAON

and say to him, 'We have come to fetch a memorial for our dead; will you give it or no?' He says, 'Yes, I will give it.' They offer *haldi* and liquor to the pillar or the stone and then the officiant picks it up and comes towards the village, the *chelik* and *motiari* dancing round him. Now, the dead man's soul comes into the stone and guides the man here and there until it is satisfied. At last of its own accord it falls from his arms on to the ground. As elsewhere they cover it with cloth and put the marriage crown. They offer a bullock and enjoy a great feast. In Randhna I saw several such pillars and near them a few memorial stones. In Kopra there are three pillars and in Charkai one.

In Baghbeda, not far from the Orissa border, there is a magnificent mango grove with shrines for Bara Pen and the Village Mother. Not far from these shrines, under a *sarai* tree, there is a stone about two feet high which is used as a memorial menhir for all members of the Poyami clan in that area. When any member of the clan dies the people come to the stone and make the usual offerings. When I saw it, there were two bundles of straw in the tree above symbolizing the roof of the stone's temple, and a tethering-rope which had been used for cow-sacrifice. Tied round it was a rope made of bark with its end splayed out to look like a flower. The Muria said that the origin of this was that a very old man of the Poyami clan died long ago and came to his descendants in a dream saying, 'In such and such forest there is a stone, bring it for me.' They did as he commanded and later when other members of the same clan died they too came in dreams and said, 'Take us to where our grandfather is.'

Finally there is the custom that we have already noticed of placing a stone in front of a modern tomb. Here we can see clearly how ancient custom survives alongside modern innovations.

## XXI

## COUNTERACTING THE ABNORMAL

(a) *The Attacks of Wild Animals*

*Hill-Maria*: 'Persons killed by tigers or other wild animals,' says Grigson, 'must be burned, not buried, at the place where their remains are found, or to which they are brought for the inquest. They must never be brought into a village, for otherwise the dead man's *hanāl* may bring the tiger there. The remains, if scattered, are collected and placed in a cloth brought from the dead man's house: but such bodies should be touched as little as possible. Logs are piled under the body where it lies and kindled, and anything found with the body or at the place where the tiger attacked the dead man is burnt with it; but no dancing dresses or other property are brought from his house to be burned with him, and no offerings of grain or *mahua* spirit are made at the grave. No *marma-kal* cairn and no *kotokal* menhir is set up for him.'<sup>1</sup>

Throughout the State the ghost of a man killed by a tiger must be very carefully treated, and it is essential that the Siraha should discover whether the tiger was sent by an enemy, whether it attacked its victim on account of some breach of tribal taboo or because of some ritual error or neglect, or whether there was any other cause. Sometimes the Siraha declares that a new god has been born and has not been worshipped or that some old god is being neglected.

But even where no special supernatural cause is given for the death, great care must be taken to prevent the tiger returning to claim more victims. This end is gained by special rites and by cremating the remains of the dead on the very spot where the kill took place. Nothing may ever be brought home from the scene of the tragedy.

*Bison-horn Maria*: These Maria do not erect *uraskal* stones after a tiger-death. They burn everything connected with the tragedy at the place of death. If the victim has been dragged from place to place, they light bundles of grass and burn a track wherever the tiger went. After the crema-

<sup>1</sup> Grigson, op. cit., 279 ff.

tion, the Waddai makes a small tiger of bamboos and catches it. The usual sacrifices are made and as the party returns home, they dig a hole at a cross-roads and bury in it rice, beans, eggs, egg-shells, a hen and a pig's head. They fill in the hole, coudung the place, put two crossed sticks of teak upon it, and then everyone steps over it and goes home without looking round.

At Tikanpal I was told that the Waddai put the bamboo tiger in front of the victim's house. He made a mixture of rice, millet and powdered egg-shell, and threw it over one of those present. The ghost then possessed the man who imitated a tiger and took the model in his teeth. The others drove away the tiger-man to an ant-hill. The Waddai bid the ghost enter the ant-hill. When it was supposed to have done so, the bamboo model fell down. Into this four bamboo nails were driven and it was thrown into the ant-hill. The Waddai made the usual sacrifices and 'bound' the ghost in its place by going round the ant-hill seven times.

*Ghotul Muria*: The Ghotul Muria have the most elaborate ceremonies for this occasion, for it is in their country that tigers are most common and tragedies most frequent. The *chelik* collect the remains of the deceased and his possessions at the very place of death and burn them. They blow a hunting-horn over the pyre and run away.

A day or two later the male members of the house go to the spot with other villagers. They dig up some of the blood-stained earth and make an image of the dead man; with rice-flour they make an image of the tiger. These are placed together inside two circles made of flour and *haldi*, and a line of flour representing a rope is drawn to join the two together. The Gaita sacrifices chickens and eggs, saying, 'Go and take your dog to some other land. Tie it up properly there and keep it safe. Don't bring it here, we don't want any dogs here.' Then he hits and breaks the model tiger with a sickle crying, 'Tiger! Tiger!'

The chickens are now cut up into a great many little bits, and some of these are given to members of the party and roasted and eaten on the spot. Bones and leaves used for this little feast must be buried carefully, for if a witch got hold of them she could use them to bring the tiger back. The party now breaks up and each member takes a solitary and zigzag route home, throwing away the little bits of chicken as they go. The idea of this is that if the ghost of the deceased tries to return to his village, he will be puzzled by the roundabout route and will be so busy eating the bits of chicken that he will never get there.

Women do not attend this ceremony, for if a woman's shadow were to fall on the materials of the feast, the tiger would come again. But if a woman is killed by a tiger, a digging-stick is thrown into the ashes of the pyre with the idea that her ghost will take it to dig roots in the jungle and not trouble the people in the village.

After a few days all those who took any active part in the cremation ceremony—such as carrying the remains or preparing the pyre—go to the place and make customary offerings in the name of the tiger, the dead man and Bagharam Pat to clear themselves of all infection. If this is not done, the tiger haunts their dreams.

After an interval, which varies from a week to three years, the people go to bring the *jiwa* of the dead man to the proper place, where it will be mingled with his ancestors. The household prepares a feast and invites all relatives. At the east of the village they build an open shed with two poles in the middle and on the floor trace a square with rice-flour. A small pot is filled with flour and put in the middle of the square, and above it another empty pot closed with a lid. A ring, threaded on a fine cord and tied between the two poles above the pot, is swung to and fro. The elders sit round and sing the Bhurkal Pata, or Tiger Song, which I will quote presently. As they sing this, the dead man's *jiwa* comes, the string breaks and the ring falls on to the lid of the pot.

The Gaita at once removes the upper pot and examines the flour in the lower vessel. If there is a 'tiger's mark' on the flour, they believe that a

tiger will again devour the man at his next birth—and since the man will be reborn in his own family this means, of course, that the tiger will again visit and harry the same village. If there is a cow's mark, the more Hinduized Muria say that the dead man will be reborn as a cow and then eaten by a tiger. But if there is a man's footprint, all will be well. They then take the ring, which is known as *bāgh-hanāl munda* to a tree (usually a *sāja* tree) nearby, and hang it up there saying, 'Now this is your home; live here and don't trouble us.'

After this the people feast, but not on meat. When all is over they throw the pots, leaves and leaf-cups into the river, bathe and return home.

A cat's footprint on the floor is considered very ominous. 'When a man is eaten by a tiger,' I was told at Remawand, 'his soul dwells in the tiger's tail. On the same day of the week on which he was cremated, a small cat forms itself out of the ashes of the pyre and wanders away into the jungle. If a man sees it and recognises it, calling it by the name of the dead man, it disappears. If not, and if the cat looks at the man, and he says nothing, another tiger will come to trouble the village.'

If a man is killed by a bear, the same ceremonies are observed.

The *Burkal Pata*, which is sung while the 'ring of the tiger-ghost' swings to and fro above the earthen pots, is often dragged out to an enormous length. It consists of a formula, which can be repeated as often as necessary, accusing one god after another of having sent the tiger which killed the man.

#### (b) *The Ondar Muttai*

Throughout India the ghost of a woman who has died in pregnancy, in the month immediately after child-birth is feared and dreaded. The reason for this may be that just as the ghosts of virgins and the unmarried are dangerous because they have missed the most delightful, the most exciting, the most interesting thing in life and are therefore supposed to be anxious after death to revenge themselves on mankind, so also the woman who dies during the process of parturition is suddenly deprived of the chief privilege and wonder of womanhood—the joy of being a mother. Bitter and disappointed she seeks an appalling vengeance upon men.

In Bastar this fearful being is known in Halbi as *Churlin* or *Bandrin* and sometimes as *Raksin* or *Banra-raksin*. The *Maria* and *Muria*, however, know her as *Ondar Muttai*.<sup>1</sup> This means the Old Bee Woman, implying, I think, that she comes upon a man with the ferocity and speed of a swarm of bees.

The *Ondar Muttai* is described everywhere with every circumstance of fear and horror. She has only one breast, so long that it is usually slung over her shoulder. She has teeth long as the palm of your hand, an enormous head, great round eyes, a bulbous nose and ears like spreading fans. Her feet are red as fire, but curiously enough are not pointing as usual back to front as in the rest of India. She dances with her breast flung across her back and calls to men to come to her. When they hear her voice their legs tremble and fail beneath them. She lives in the forest or on the bank of a lake, and on the day the koel first sings you can see her eyes across the water. In some villages, there is a belief that you are safe as long as you are in the company of buffaloes.

The *Ondar Muttai* appears to human beings in several different forms. Towards women and children she nearly always displays her dangerous and terrifying aspect. The *Raja Muria* of Chananpur say that when a child is born and the placenta is not expelled, the ghost of the mother after death pursues young children. She catches them and carries them about holding them against her breast. This is so terrible that the children weep and weep and cannot be consoled.

When the *Ondar Muttai* catches a man, sometimes she tickles him until he is so weak and exhausted that she can do her will upon him. Sometimes she says to him, 'Will you eat black *gur* or white *gur*?' If he answers,

<sup>1</sup> In some places the word *Oharande* is used.

'I'll eat black *gur*' she fills his mouth with black stones and so kills him, then removes his brain and eats it.

In Erlam village a tiger killed a Bison-horn Maria woman during her pregnancy. She was cremated, but afterwards appeared to the whole village. 'We saw her with her wild hair and her long breast and she cried to us. The Waddai got a long bamboo pole and persuaded her to climb up into a hollow tree. He stood beneath and thrust the pole into her vagina and after that she kept quiet and did not bother us any longer.'

The Bison-horn Maria near Chitrakot have many stories of the Raksin, as they call the ghost of a pregnant woman in this area. Thirty years ago, they say, a Maria woman died during her delivery. There were many women with her, some on her back, others her hands and feet. They thought that she had fainted but when they lifted her up they saw her turning into a Raksin before their eyes. Her hands immediately grew long nails which dug into their arms. They ran away in fear and the Waddai had to come and 'bind' her with his charms. They buried her with the usual precautions as soon as possible.

Another tale is of what happened in Ratenga, thirty-five years ago. A Saora and his wife were living there and the woman was pregnant. One night, while her husband was away in Jagdalpur for work, her pains came on her. She was all alone in her pain and alone she died. There as her corpse lay in the house she became a Raksin. After she had become a Raksin, the villagers say, the baby was born and she fed it. When the villagers saw what had happened they ran away in terror. That very day the husband returned and found his child crying. He brought a bundle of brinjals and his wife met him crying, 'Take your child.' She herself fell on the brinjals and ate them raw. He said, 'Why are you eating them raw?' and she replied, 'Hum, hum, hum.' When he looked at her and saw her long hair and nails like claws he grew afraid. He threw the child into her arms and ran away. As he went he met an old woman who said, 'Your wife has become a Raksin and we have all run away.' Presently he met an old Kalar cutting hemp who, when he heard the story, took a *hanjani*-fiddle and went to the house playing it. When the Raksin heard the music she began to dance and as she was dancing the Waddai bound her, and they were able to bury the body and so prevent her doing further harm.

The Ondar Muttai is said to be most powerful on the night of the anniversary of her death.

Sometimes the Ondar Muttai approaches men in very different guise. In her enchanting aspect, one is tempted to describe her as the personification of the erotic dream. Thus the headman of Ulera village, a Ghotul Muria, described how once in a dream a lovely girl came to him. Her hair beautifully combed, her neck adorned with necklaces, many combs in her head, she sat down beside him and smiled at him. 'Seeing her my mind was for her and I wondered if I could get her. Then she came and sat very close to me. She seemed to have large and lovely breasts. I caught them with my hand but there was nothing there. Then I went to her but found she had no vagina. All my power went from me and then I saw that she was a hideous ghost with one long breast across her shoulder, and I awoke. All the next day I felt very ill.' This dream is typical of scores of similar experiences.

In order to avoid the danger of the Ondar Muttai special precautions are taken at the time of her disposal. The Bison-horn Maria in common with everyone in Bastar believe that she cannot cross water, so they cremate her body between two streams. The Waddai makes four iron nails and drives these into each corner of the pyre. Sometimes nails of *kassi*<sup>1</sup> wood are used. Thorn bushes are also placed above the body. It is considered by the Ghotul Muria very important to bury the body immediately. Even if the woman dies at midnight, she must be taken out. Here they bury the corpse and only unmarried boys are allowed to handle it. They carry

<sup>1</sup> *Bridelia retusa*, Spreng.



it quickly to the grave, throw the earth upon it and run away. On the day the body is buried the earth round the grave trembles.

In many villages the Gaita or Waddai goes round the grave throwing *mandia* grain upon it with the idea that the ghost will be so busy picking up and counting the small grains that she will not have time to do anything else.

The Dorla of Dubatota tie bundles of thorns round the wrists and ankles of the corpse. The Dhurwa of Netanar said that the Gaita drives iron nails through the hands and feet. The Ghotul Muria of Phunder described how once when a pregnant woman died, the *chelik* tied her body to the bier with a very strong rope and after lowering it into the grave the Gaita drove four nails into the ground at its four corners. This protection, however, was not successful and so a herd of she-buffaloes were taken to the grave and made to trample upon it. This is another example of the belief that there is some special protection against the Ondar Muttai in the buffalo. The Hill Maria round Chota Dongar said that when a pregnant woman died only women can dispose of the corpse. Women dig the grave on the far side of the village boundary and on the four corners put bits of iron slag and young shoots of the bombax tree. If they put a memorial stone for her which, in any case, will be a small one, they put a bombax pole there also. The Muria sometimes lay a ebony bough over the grave.

The Ondar Muttai or Churlin, however, returns to her own country after a certain time. For example, the Ghotul Muria say that in Jeth (July) at the time of violent wind and rain, the Ondar Muttai goes to her own land, the Rakasgarh, and mingles with her own people there. The Hill Maria said the same thing, that after three years she goes to her own country and I have found a similar tradition among the Bison-horn Maria. What happens to her there is not revealed.

#### (c) *The Death of a Menstruating Woman*

When a woman dies during her menstrual period, she is not so dangerous as an Ondar Muttai but there is a general sense of defilement. Should she die in the special menses hut, the villagers demand a feast from the relatives before they are willing to move the body. Only young unmarried men may touch it and they burn the corpse some distance away from the usual cremation ground. If a menhir is erected it is put separately.

In Mokhpal, the Bison-horn Maria said that when a woman dies during her period only the members of her own family may carry her out and after the funeral the other villagers are to eat with them until they give a feast and sacrifice a hen to *Chota Tumnar* a pig to the clan-god. But at another Bison-horn Maria village, Chota Tumnar, they said that she was carried out to the pyre by unmarried boys of any house of the village.

#### (d) *The Death of the Unmarried*

All over India it is believed that those who die unmarried turn into unsatisfied and petulant evil spirits. They have been frustrated in obtaining the loveliest things in life and for all time they are miserable. It is curious that it is not usually virginity but the fact that the dead boy or girl has not passed through the marriage ceremony that matters. A married boy who has not consummated the marriage is said to live on any *sāja* tree on his property to protect it. Women may go near but not women in menses or pregnancy or their husbands. The Ghotul Muria take special precautions when a *chelik* or *motiāri* dies for these may turn into Mirchuk and trouble the other boys and girls. The Gaita drives nails into the four corners of the grave and the *ghotul* members make a special offering to the ghost begging it not to trouble them. In some villages it is believed that the ghost of a *motiāri* lives under a *mahua* tree and the cooking for the funeral feast is therefore done under this tree. In Padbera, the Muria believe that when a *motiāri* dies she becomes a Mirchuk and lives in a *pipal*<sup>2</sup> tree, and a *chelik* becomes a Matia and lives in a banyan tree. Occasionally they occupy an

<sup>2</sup> *Ficus religiosa*, Linn.

old ant-hill. Very young children live in a banyan tree and drink its milky sap. In Bakulwahi twelve years ago a *motiāri* died and the Gaita drove nails into the four corners of the *ghotul* building and went round it with the *chelik* in procession in order to protect it against ghostly invasion. They sacrificed a pig saying, 'Are you going to stay here, or will you go away?' When the pig ate the rice which was as usual offered to it the Muria understood that the *motiāri* was ready to go away. They carried the pig to the boundary of the village and killed it there and thus freed the *ghotul* from any danger from the ghost of that girl. In Palari the Ghotul Muria said that when a *chelik* was killed by a tiger he turned into a Baghmeri-bhut. When he died of ordinary illness he became a Kuara-bhut, revealing his presence in a whirlwind. When very young *chelik* died they became Arajatta-bhut and entered into people's stomachs, thus giving them a lot of pain. In Palnar the ghost of the *chelik* or *motiāri* attacks whichever member of the *ghotul* is the first to get married after the death, presumably out of jealousy. When the Siraha diagnoses what is the matter he offers the usual sacrifices and making a little man out of straw asks the Bhut to leave its victim and possess the straw-man instead. This is then carried to the boundary of the village and thrown away. Where the *chelik* or a *motiāri* have died during the previous year, on the eve of any wedding the Gaita goes to a small date palm and ties it round and round with string saying, 'Go away from here, don't come near the boundary of our village.' puts a large stone on the tree and the wedding can take place in safety. Then he After the wedding he removes the stone, unties the string and offers an egg and chicken.

In Kabonga it was said that when a *chelik* or *motiāri* died, they became what they called Uriya-bhut, though the usual Gondi word for the ghost of a *motiāri* is Nelanj-jural. But they said that there was nothing very dangerous about them. 'The Uriya-bhut plays and dances just like the *chelik* and *motiāri*. In fun it throws leaves and dust into the air; it blows in people's eyes; it throws down grass from the roof. No one need ever be afraid of the ghost of a *chelik* or *motiāri*.'

During the bazaar ceremonies in the east of the State when these are performed for a dead *chelik* or *motiāri* the villagers say, 'Mahapurub sent you into this world only for a little while; he did not intend you to live with us for long; so don't be angry and don't trouble us.' The parents are led round the bazaar by their little fingers and then go home, leaving the Uriya-bhut in the bazaar.

The dead boy or girl is not mingled with the Departed as are the married, and no menhir is erected for them.

Sometimes the ghost of a *chelik* may be dangerous. In the compound of the Khutgaon *ghotul* there was formerly a great stone. One of the boys died and the ghost came to sit on it bringing an epidemic with him. Many boys and girls died and the *ghotul* had to be destroyed and rebuilt in another place. But the stone remained where it was and when the villagers tried to move it, sickness broke out again and so they left it alone.

The Raja Muria of Kumli said that when an unmarried girl dies her ghost is dangerous because if a witch can get hold of it, she gives it the form of a pretty girl and sends her to rob men of their seed. Such a girl may appear as a man's mother or sister and torment him.

A dead *motiāri* may also continue to visit her old friends of the *ghotul*. This only happens however, when the boys sleep outside, for it is believed that Lingo protects the actual building from the invasion of any witch or spirit. The Sirdarsinh of the Chargaon *ghotul* told us how he once had an encounter with such a ghost. 'She visited me and I went to her; for many days she was with me; I could not get rid of her. I often went to her and my clothes were spoilt with my discharges. At last I gave her a comb and necklace and she went away, but for fear she may return I sacrifice a pig every year'. So too *motiāri* complain of visits from some old lover's ghost: 'he comes to us, pressing us.'

(e) *Accidental Deaths*

In all cases of accidental death, there are modifications of the usual ceremonies. The Hill Maria bury or cremate the victims of any kind of accident some distance away from the usual place of disposal, but menhirs may be set up for those who die of small-pox or other epidemic diseases. Both the Hill Maria and Bison-horn Maria sometimes make a cairn of stones for those who die of drowning or accident or as a result of murder, and the passer-by is expected to throw a stone on the top of it. I saw such a cairn outside Salnar village for a man who had died in the Tea Gardens of Assam, and there is a great pile of stones for a murdered girl at the head of a pass crossing the Tiralgarh Hills. Grigson says that persons killed by lightning are cremated at some distance from the ordinary cremation ground and no menhir may be erected for them. But in some places the Bison-horn Maria apparently do put a menhir. Customs vary greatly from place to place.

The Ghotul Muria do not put a menhir for any one who is drowned. In the Jhorian Pargana they say that they put a menhir for someone struck by lightning. In Palnar, the Ghotul Muria said that anyone who died from drowning, falling from a sago palm hanging or being murdered turned into a Mirchuk. Those who die from snake-bite, a fall from a tree or who are burnt to death are treated in the ordinary way, but cholera and small-pox cases are dangerous and are not given memorial stones. Nor are those who die of leprosy, yaws or dropsy, which is often regarded as a punishment for adultery. In the case of a man who has died of snake-bite, these Muria bring a branch of the *sāp-kāta* shrub (which is elsewhere called the *yogi-latta*) and rub its thorns right down the body to prevent the ghost returning.<sup>1</sup>

## XXII

## CONCLUSION

Perhaps the most striking element in our long survey is the emphasis laid by the Bastar aborigines on the continuity of all existence, their belief that death is but an incident in a vital process which continues after the soul has shed its temporary physical integument. But the Maria and Muria have not been able to take the further step forward from this into a serene faith and hope in the happiness of the dead who desire to help and serve the living. The dead appear rather as dissatisfied, mischievous and wayward, deeply interested in human life but anxious to interfere, to display their power, almost to show off, rather than to assist mankind.

The Departed and the Ancestors are a sort of perpetual old guard keeping a close watch upon their descendents. They are a strictly orthodox and conservative body ever ready to take offence, always on their dignity, suspicious, revengeful, unsympathetic. The honour of the tribe is very dear to them and they are determined to see that it is not betrayed by their unworthy heirs. Any breach of tribal, law, any change, any heterodoxy in thought or worship is immediately and drastically punished.

The Departed are, to some extent, associated with the fertility<sup>2</sup> of the land, but I have not anywhere found the belief that the menhirs can improve the crops and the soil. The Departed are remembered at sowing and harvest, at winnowing time and when the crops are brought to the granary. The Pot of the Departed is indeed often kept among the grain. But such remembrance is no more than is paid to the Departed at every chance and turn of mortal life. They are equally remembered when a man drinks liquor or marries his daughter or goes to a dance and, as I say, they are remembered not so much to ensure their blessing as to prevent their interference.

<sup>1</sup> For a detailed account of the ceremonies in connection with people who have died as a result of murder or suicide or who have been hanged, see my *Maria Murder and Suicide* (Bombay, 1943).

<sup>2</sup> I have frequently noticed that traps are set in the graveyards and near the memorial stones. At Magheda I saw an ingenious peacock-trap within a few yards of the graves. At Baghbeda there was a rat-trap under the shadow of the menhirs. At Markabera there was a tiger-trap similarly placed. It would be tempting to suggest that there is some deep connection here but I think it is more likely that the traps are set in the graveyards because animals are attracted by the offerings of grain and roots that are made both to the menhirs and on the graves.

The aim, therefore, of the aboriginal cult of the dead in Bastar is above all things to put the Departed in their place, to keep them in order and to keep them quiet. Menhirs are set up, memorial pillars are carved, sacrifices are offered, endless pains are taken to ensure that the dead are not offended and in their spleen bring disaster upon the world. For the dead suffer an unfortunate change of character after they have left the earth. The kindest, friendliest, gentlest nature becomes warped through death and in a sense it may be true to say that human beings who are still alive should feel a deep pity for their unfortunate companions who have gone before them into what is very truly a land of shadows. Perhaps this is why the Maria and Muria are so anxious to bring their dead back into their own families 'where they will find warmth and love' and where they will receive the comfort that they need.

## REVIEWS

BISHNU DEY and JOHN IRWIN, *Jamini Roy* (Indian Society of Oriental Art, Calcutta, 1945), Rs. 10.

THIS admirable monograph consisting of a brilliant introductory essay, six plates in colour and thirty other reproductions is the first major survey of an artist whose work has often been misunderstood but who is yet the one outstanding Indian painter of his generation.

Jamini Roy was born in 1887 at Belliatore in the Bankura district of Bengal, in an area where certain forms of Bengal folk-art still flourish. He learnt painting at the Calcutta Art School and until the early nineteen twenties, produced pictures which were notable only for their academic manner and slick naturalistic skill. If he was aware of Bengal folk-art he saw in it no relevance to his painting. But in 1921 there was an abrupt and cataclysmic change. Such changes are by no means rare in art and in England Graham Sutherland is a recent case in point. When they occur they are marked by the sudden emergence of a new style, the discovery of a new set of private idioms, the achievement of an entirely new way of exploring the sensibility. The style which after 1921 became the definition of Jamini Roy changed the competent but mediocre painter into a brilliant creator of dazzling and original forms.

In the development of this new style, two distinct factors obviously played their part. The first was a contact with the work of Picasso and a realization of the values implicit in modern European painting. No artist, not even in Bengal, can ignore the reproductions which shout at him from books and papers. The effect on Jamini Roy of this awareness was to open out a new way of painting, to sanction a revulsion from his previous work, to point the way to 'the bounding line' and 'the brilliance of form.'

The second factor was the re-discovery of Bengal folk-art. In Kalighat drawings, Hooghly scroll paintings and Burdwan dolls, Jamini Roy found a set of idioms which suddenly excited his sensibility. In the fluid curving lines of Kalighat, the flat tones, the organic geometry of the scrolls, the vertical distortions of the dolls, he found all the aids he needed to a new release of sensibility.

The first result of this new research was a set of paintings which were merely exercises in folk-art idioms. Jamini Roy took certain formulas and used them to see where they would lead and at this stage much of his work is only 'false' Kalighat or 'false' extensions of Hooghly scrolls. Yet they must not on that account be ignored. If they are little more than repetitions, it is these exercises that finally precipitated his style. In the paintings reproduced in this book, the basic values are the same as in Bengal folk-art. There is the same achievement of intensity by simplification, the same use of flat planes and pure tones, the same reliance on 'the bounding line.' But the idioms are no longer those of folk-art. They have been absorbed, enlarged and altered. The rhythms have a subtlety and complexity far beyond the anonymous designs of village painting. The figures

have a nobility of pose, a natural majesty that is lacking in the Kalighat drawings. Above all, geometric patterns are linked to human situations. If the starting point of the Christ figure (plate XI) is a Burdwan doll, the painting has a human grace, an emotional tension which makes the doll seem only an arid diagram. 'All art,' said Geoffrey Grigson, 'exists in a tension between geometry and what affects the beholder as being organic or vital.' The achievement of Jamini Roy is that he has enlarged the formulas of Bengal folk-art so that they are no longer vehicles for somewhat heartless rhythms, but express the whole nobility of life.

I have so far said little of this new monograph. Its greatest value is that it focusses attention only on the adult and major work of Jamini Roy. There is not a single painting reproduced which is not an example of his work at its best. The question of its technical origins in folk-art or its affinity with Picasso, Bishnu Dey and John Irwin regard as irrelevant to the greatness of his actual accomplishment. Moreover, even if his work were only a repetition of folk-art (and his major work is not), they emphasize that it is only in folk-art that we can now discover a community sanction. For the Bengali artist who would give his work a social relevance a return, to folk-art may well be the only way. Their essay is not only a brilliant tribute to a great artist but it raises many of the issues confronting art to-day.

W. G. ARCHER

# THE ABORIGINAL TRIBES OF HYDERABAD

Volume II.

## THE REDDIS OF THE BISON HILLS

A STUDY IN ACCULTURATION

by

CHRISTOPH von FÜRER-HAIMENDORE, Ph.D.

*in collaboration with*

ELIZABETH von FÜRER-HAIMENDORF

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*in collaboration with*

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# MAN IN INDIA

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## COMMENT

IN a recent review in *Man in India* (Vol. XXIV, pp. 212-13) the view has been expressed that in India the time is not yet ripe for comparative ethnological studies and that 'it would be much preferable for an investigator completely to study the life of a single tribe in all its facets rather than take a single facet of various tribes and compare the single facets only.' If this advice were followed, anthropologists working in India would have to confine themselves to a purely descriptive attitude, viewing individual tribal cultures as isolated entities rather than as elements in the cultural structure of the sub-continent. There is no need to stress the importance of close and sympathetic studies of individual tribes, but it is a very debatable point whether in India any more than elsewhere straight monographs, covering all aspects of a tribal culture, are the only legitimate form of presenting anthropological material. Comparison is the life-blood of both historical and natural science, and it is indeed only by looking beyond the limits of local cultures that the ethnographer becomes an ethnologist. Many elements in a tribe's cultural make-up become fully understandable only when traced to their source which may lie outside the tribe and even in a different cultural sphere. To shut one's eyes to the interrelation of tribal cultures is to invite narrow, local interpretations of institutions and customs and to ignore that primitive no less than the more advanced civilizations have extended over wide areas and been enriched and modified by manifold culture contacts. The interpretation of an aboriginal culture simply as the product of its present environment would be as fundamentally un-historic as, say, the attempt to understand the art of Gandhara without any reference to its Greek roots,



or to interpret Scandinavian folk-lore without realizing that it is based on a blending of pagan, nordic traditions and the newer Christian ways of life and thought.

Anthropology fulfils a double function. As a social science it analyses social processes and describes the working of tribal societies, and as such is a valuable instrument in the hands of the administrator. But it is also an historical discipline which in conjunction with prehistory and archæology deals with the earlier stages in the development of human civilization. In many ways anthropological methods resemble those of prehistory and if without written documents the prehistorian can ascertain the nature and diffusion of neolithic civilizations, there is no reason why the ethnologist should not trace the ramifications of tribal cultures. Indeed in America, Africa and to a lesser degree Oceania, investigations into the history and composition of tribal civilizations are far advanced. In North America, for instance, one can clearly discern not only the main cultural spheres with their distinctive elements, but also the historical development of individual tribes and the interaction of the different culture complexes. Similarly in Africa the migrations of the Bantu-speaking races have been the subject of detailed and painstaking investigations, and although not all problems have yet been solved, the broad outlines of the history of African civilizations are gradually emerging.

In India, on the other hand, attempts to co-ordinate our knowledge of tribal cultures have been few and far between, and there has indeed been the tendency to regard any comparative studies premature and unscientific. The reviewer quoted above considers, for instance, the drawing of analogies between megalithic rites in India and megalithic cultures in other parts of the world as both rash and out of place. Yet, Indian tribal cultures have not developed in a vacuum, and parallels between the megalithic cultures of Peninsular India and those of Assam and the rest of

Southeast Asia are so close that a historic connection cannot be reasonably doubted. As long as investigators bury themselves in individual tribal cultures, they are likely to overlook such affinities and remain unaware of the great currents of culture that have left their imprint on the Indian scene. Comparisons of entire cultures, however desirable, are often impracticable, involving detailed studies of innumerable aspects of culture in a large number of societies, but even the study of individual institutions can disclose important contacts and affinities and lead thereby to the perception of major culture complexes. Just as the historian, far from being committed to the study of *all* aspects of a particular civilization or a particular period, may analyse forms of government, trends in art, or religious movements in a group of countries and over a period of several centuries, so may the anthropologist concentrate with advantage on a specific subject and study, say the eschatological beliefs, a particular social institution or a special craft throughout India or even the whole of Southeast Asia. What has discredited comparative studies is the practice of authors such as Briffault of picking their material at random from primitive races in widely separated parts of the world and drawing generalizations from examples torn from their context. But such a method is very different from the investigation of certain aspects of culture within a given cultural and geographical sphere.

The crux of the matter is that while Indian anthropology has made great strides in monographic description of individual tribes, comparative studies that co-ordinate and integrate the findings of field workers are still sadly lacking. But only by such studies can we gradually trace the sequence of events which has led to the formation of the aboriginal civilizations as they exist today, and thus lay the foundation for a comprehensive Ethnology of India. None will deny that we are still far from such an aim and that Aboriginal India presents today a confusing welter

of cultures, of whose interrelations and diverse origins very little is known. Prehistoric and linguistic studies, which in other parts of the world—the former notably in the East Indies, the latter in Africa—are playing an important rôle in the clarification of cultural and racial movements are in India comparatively undeveloped and the anthropologist must often tackle his problems without the support of these sister sciences. But this is no cause for despair and much would be gained if, without neglecting essential field work, the universities of this country encouraged comparative studies in the tribal civilizations of India and their affinities with archaic cultures beyond its geographical borders.

C. VON FÜRER-HAIMENDORF

# CHARMS FROM CHHATTISGARH

## A RAIN CHARM

LET the rain fall, Pawan Dularuwa, let the rain pour down  
Your home is between the seven seas and the sixteen streams  
Awake the Water Queen, for by her help the rain will fall  
The Seven Sisters live in the sea  
When they play in the water, when they sound *kilkora-kilkora*  
A storm comes up from the sea  
Where is the thunder ? Where is the rain ?  
Pawan Dularuwa, we have come to honour you  
That rain may fall on the earth  
When the rain comes we will recognize your power  
The grain will grow and all the world will rejoice  
Pawan Dularuwa, we have come, we sing to you, now give  
us happiness, Pawan Dularuwa.

## A CHARM AGAINST HEADACHE

KISNI BAI says, I will live in his hair  
Wild goose and eagle say, We will not let her stay  
Guru blow her away. Guruain blow her away  
Kisni Bai come down from his head  
Kisni Bai come down from his forehead  
Take your poisonous grindstone with you  
Kisni Bai says, I will settle in his eyes  
Wild goose, god's goose, let it burn quickly  
Sleep sleep sleep O whisper sleep little girl  
Go go go little girl to your house  
Your baby sister was playing ; she has opened the door  
Kisni Bai come down from his eyes  
Go home to Rai Ratanapur.

## LOVE-CHARMS

### I

BAGFUL of haldi-roots  
Eye-girl lighting a lamp  
The dark girls, the fair girls  
Hold out their hands  
Go my strong strong charm  
Go my leaping charm  
Awake love in this girl  
Love in her walking feet  
Love in the dust her feet stir  
Love in her seeing eyes  
Love in her moving eyelids  
Love in her listening ears  
Love in her speaking tongue

Love in her laughing teeth  
 Awake, love, my charm  
 Love in the breasts ready to be fondled  
 Love in the thing fit for love  
 Go my strong strong charm  
 Let the charm take this girl.

## II

As a net spreads across the river  
 May my love-charm fall upon her  
 In my net I bind the river-weed  
 In my net I bind the little fish  
 I bind as far as nine ploughs can go  
 I bind the spite of witches  
 I bind her house and door of victory  
 I bind the seats of four wise men  
 May my love-net fall upon her  
 To what village will you go ?  
 Take the four-fingers-breadth of pleasure  
 Under the thighs is *jujuk-mujuk*  
 Inside is a well  
 The red-beaked parrot  
 Drinks the water of the cloud  
 May my love-net fall upon her.

## III

ALMOHA JALMOHA, may my love's enchantment  
 Take the water and the green scum on the water  
 And the water-girl at the time of fetching water  
 May my charm possess and madden  
 Her silver pitcher and its gold support  
 Her two-and-thirty teeth that shine like diamonds  
 Her speaking tongue, her smiling lips, her eyelids  
 May my love's enchantment madden  
 The vermillioned parting of her hair  
 Her bun of hair, the ribbon tying it  
 The *silver* in her ears, her nose-ring  
 The ten hundred rings upon her fingers  
 Her armlets and the bangles on her wrists  
 Her shining bangles and her sounding anklets  
 The ten hundred scorpion-rings upon her toes  
 Her spring-lovely sari twelve cubits long  
 The jacket tightening round her breasts  
 The fish that darts *chir-chir* in the stream  
 May my love's enchantment madden

This girl that pisses in the mortar  
 Her waist-belt, the cloth round her little sister.  
 Go, go, my love-charm  
 Go eight hundred Mohani, nine hundred Chhittawar  
 Go fourteen hundred Singhi Tumi, go  
 Go by my Guru's word and by my word  
 To such and such a girl, enchant her with my love  
 Let her weep when she looks at other men  
 Let her laugh when she looks at me  
 Let her close her legs when other men approach her  
 Let her spread them wide, lying on her back, when I come  
     near  
 Let her two-and-thirty teeth shine with the happiness of  
     love  
 May my love's enchantment madden her  
 May the eight parts of her body tremble with desire  
 When she sees me, let her undo her cloth.  
 When she does not see me, let her weep *dhar-dhar-dhar*,  
 When she does not see me, let her breasts wobble  
 When she does not see me, let her thing quiver  
 May my love's enchantment madden her  
 I will sacrifice a fresh black goat  
 And two young fowls  
 When I gain my desire.

#### A CHARM TO DRIVE AWAY GHOSTS AND DEMONS

He brings the blue mare from the stable  
 There's a bridle on her head, a whip in his hand  
 He plays on his mare with two or four others  
 He summons the ghosts and demons  
 A tamarind with spreading branches stands in the middle of the  
     road  
 Its fruits hang above like pearls  
 Below Bhainsasur is on guard  
 It is the buffalo of Raja Rama  
 The Teli and the Kalar yoke it to the plough  
 It drinks the liquor of twelve stills  
 It eats sixteen hundred goats  
 Yet its belly is not filled  
 It devours the ghosts and demons of the village  
 It uses ghosts as its blanket  
 It lies on ghosts as on a mattress  
 It eats nothing but ghosts and demons  
 On the day it does not get a ghost  
 It keeps a holy fast  
 This is the Haka of Bhainsasur  
 Awake ! Arise ! Beware !

## CHARMS TO HEAL SORE EYES

Girl, girl, where has your mother gone ?  
 To the bazaar.  
 Girl, girl, what will she do there ?  
 Bring a pot.  
 Girl, girl, what will she do with it ?  
 Fetch water.  
 Girl, girl, why does she want water ?  
 To bathe the eyes.  
 Girl, girl, why should she bathe them ?  
 Because they are sore.  
 Who will blow on them ? The Guru will blow.  
 I will blow, I the Guru's disciple.  
 With my blowing, my blowing  
 I will rouse the waves of the seven seas.  
 I will make the eyes cool  
 Cool as the water in an earthen pot.

## II

GIRL, girl, where have your mother and brother  
 gone ?  
 They have gone to the Honey Forest.  
 Girl, girl, why have they gone there ?  
 They have gone to make charcoal.  
 Girl, girl, what will they do with the charcoal ?  
 They will make a scythe.  
 Girl, girl, what will they do with the scythe ?  
 They will sell it for salt.  
 Girl, girl, what will they do with the salt ?  
 They will blow on my eyes.  
 Who will blow on your eyes ?  
 The Guru will blow  
 I will blow, I the Guru's disciple.  
 With my blowing, my blowing  
 I will rouse the waves of the seven seas  
 I will make the eyes cool  
 Cool as the water in an earthen pot.

## TO KILL MAGGOTS IN A WOUND

THE white cock beneath the stone  
 The magic stone is in the house  
 Let the white cock flap his wings.  
 When the cock's wings flap on this side  
 Let the diamonds fall  
 When the cock's wings flap on that side  
 Let the maggots fall.

## TO DRIVE AWAY GHOSTS

ADAK-PHADAK dances the ghost  
He drums on a golden plate  
*Adak-phadak* dances the ghost  
Crowds of merchants  
Crowds of goldsmiths  
Gather where our Guru stands  
*Adak-phadak* dances the ghost  
The Guru is holding a golden broom  
What is the broom for ?  
To blow the ghost away.  
Who will blow him away ? The Guru will blow  
I will blow, I the Guru's disciple.  
With my blowing, my blowing  
And my golden broom  
I will blow the ghost away.

VERRIER ELWIN



# PARDHAN IDEAS ABOUT WITCHCRAFT

BY SHAMRAO HIVALE

PARDHAN witches do not differ from witches in other parts of India. They are equally feared and are believed to practise their horrid art in much the same way. Some, it is said, can turn themselves into wild beasts; others can make a bride barren at her wedding; yet others can make a disdainful lover impotent, give amenorrhoea to a rival, and destroy the health and beauty of a child.

The following stories will illustrate more vividly than any comment the important part that a witch plays in the life of a Pardhan village. The following is an account given me by a now elderly Pardhan, of Kanchanpur. It was evident that he believed implicitly everything that he told me and that the strange scene he described had actually taken place.

My little son was attacked by a witch and died. We buried him in the dry bed of a stream and covered his body with a thorn-bush to protect it. I was afraid that the witch would try to rouse the dead body and remove the liver, so I went to the grave at night with a stick of a castor plant and some water which I got from a Chamar's house. I waited and waited and then at last I saw the woman approaching. We attacked her and the people with me beat her with their sticks but they had no effect on her. So I ran after her and caught her and put my little finger through the hole in the lobe of her ear. This immediately stopped her. I then beat her with the castor plant and cut her forehead. I put some of the Chamar's water in her mouth. This defiled the Bir which always lives in the little tail that a witch has and which enables her to turn into a tigress. Then we dragged her back to the village and we all spat on to some *mandia* flour and put a little human excreta on it and we forced her to eat it. The lobe of her right ear was split open and we cut a little hair from her head. The result of these things was to cure her of her wickedness.

The cure for witchcraft outlined in this story follows the conventional lines. The castor plant is everywhere regarded as powerful in magic and in Bastar is placed on the roofs of menstruation huts. The shaving of the head, the cutting of the forehead and the breaking of the ear are all means of breaking the woman's power by defiling her, as each of these things is in itself sufficient to excommunicate her. Apparently, to be a successful witch, one's social position must be unassailable. There is a very interesting reference to the little tail that witches are supposed to have. This belief that there is an actual physical basis to witchcraft has been found also in Africa. The Azande, for example, believe that it exists somewhere in the abdomen and that as a

result of this witchcraft substance, which according to some authorities may be a round hairy ball with teeth or like a mouth with large sharp teeth, the witch can work her will.<sup>1</sup>

Another account of a witch comes from Patangarh. The woman is described as having been fat and round.

During the 'bitter sleep,' the sleep before dawn which makes you very bitter if you are roused from it, this witch once went naked as a cow into the house of Daulat in order to drink his blood through a straw. But although Daulat was sleeping deeply, he awoke and jumped up and tried to catch the woman, but she was very slippery as though her whole body had been smeared with oil and she escaped. He shouted and the neighbours started searching but she turned herself into a black cow and so escaped.

This power of turning into animals is, of course, commonly attributed to witches and magicians. In Patangarh, Bariar's grandfather is said to have been able to turn himself into a tiger. He was a very famous Panda.

One day he was going with his wife on his Mangteri tour. As they were going through the forests they saw a deer grazing some distance away. The Panda told his wife that he would catch it but he added, 'Do not be afraid when I come back to you in another form.' Before her eyes he turned himself into a tiger, chased and killed the deer and brought it back and laid it at her feet. She had a little magic powder and she threw it at him saying, 'Go away,' whereupon he resumed his usual form and the two enjoyed a feast of venison.

I cannot understand how much of these the people really believe, yet when I was living in Karanja a number of Gonds actually went to the Police Station with the report that a man had begun to turn himself into a tiger in front of their very eyes. A Sub-Inspector came to ask me under what section of the Indian Penal Code it was possible to prosecute a man for this offence.

A witch can give a man leprosy. Daulat the Pardhan leper is supposed to have contracted his terrible disease because he offended a woman. Daulat's wife was always leaving him and going to stay with her brother at Kukarramath. Daulat was naturally annoyed at this and one day he brought another woman to his house as co-wife. He got tired of her after fifteen days and married her to his younger brother. She was very angry at this and said to him, 'Go, you have insulted me. So will god do yo you.' Soon after this Daulat began 'to talk *bhan-bhan* like a bumble-bee and his mouth and ears swelled up and became numb. We thought at first that he was suffering from the Ahiraj

<sup>1</sup> E. E. Evans-Pritchard, *Witchcraft, Oracles and Magic among the Azande* (Oxford, 1937), pp. 21 ff.

sickness,<sup>1</sup> but he got worse and worse and it was soon clear that he had leprosy.' When the Gunia was consulted, the name of the woman he had refused to marry came every time and the people have no doubt that Daulat's disease was caused by her.

Black magic can also make a person blind. One day a Gond of Sakua village died and the Pardhan went to the funeral as usual. His body was wrapped in a new cloth but some of it remained over and this was hung up in the house. The Dasondi's wife, Kani, stole the cloth and the dead man's son who was a magician said in anger, 'The thief has closed the eyes of the dead and her own eyes will be closed.' Within a week there was an accident and the woman actually did lose her eyesight.

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<sup>1</sup> The Ahiraj sickness is caused by a snake of the same name. This snake gets very hot in the warm weather and plunges into water to cool itself. Should some of the water splashed out fall on a human being, he gets scales all over his body. It is said that thousands of these snakes, driven by the burning heat of their bodies, move towards the Himalayas to cool themselves and their poison flows down the rivers to infect mankind.

# THE CULT OF THE CLAN GODS AMONG THE RAJ GONDS OF HYDERAHAD

BY CHRISTOPH VON FÜRER-HAIMENDORF

## I. INTRODUCTION

IN the existing literature on the religion of the Gonds of the Central Provinces there is much confusion in regard to the position of the clan-gods, and it seems indeed that in many areas the cult of these deities has reached an advanced stage of disintegration. Neither Hislop's paper nor R. V. Russell's article on Gonds in the *Tribes and Castes of the Central Provinces* convey the impression that the cult of the clan-gods forms the very core of Gond religion; where clans have become dispersed and their members are no longer able to visit the ritual clan-centres, domestic godlings have taken the place of the 'great god' and the older system is hardly recognizable<sup>1</sup>, away those who live. But among the Raj Gonds of Hyderabad, and particularly in the hilly tracts extending between the Penganga and the Godavari Rivers, ancient Gond religion is still flourishing and it was there that I collected the material for this article. Connections between the Gonds of Hyderabad and those of the neighbouring Yeotmal and Chanda Districts are very close, and the same beliefs and cult-forms prevail among the Gonds on both sides of the State border. But while in the Central Provinces growing contacts with Hindu populations are gradually modifying Gond custom, old forms of ritual, including the sacrifice of cows, persist in the seclusion of the Adilabad highlands where Gonds form still the bulk of the population.

The cult of the clan-deities occupies there a dominant position in Gond life, and is firmly anchored in an elaborate mythology, which the Pardhans, the Gonds' hereditary bards, preserve by oral tradition.

According to accepted Gond doctrine the culture-hero Pahandi Kupar Lingal, instructed the ancestors of the tribe in the cult of deities to be worshipped by each of the four phratries (*saga*). One myth relates that the four sons of the god Persa Pen, the *biradar sale*, yielded to the persuasions of the Gonds to become their gods, while other myths speak of Pahandi Kupar Lingal procuring for the four original phratries four iron spearheads (*sale*), four whisks (*chawwur*), four sets of brass bells (*gagra*), four bamboo staves (*kati*) and four cloths (*harwa*), the symbols used in the cult of Persa Pen, the 'great god.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In his article 'Folklore of the Baster Clan-God's, *Man*, Vol. XLIII, 1943 No. 83, Verrier Elwin gives a detailed description of the clan deities of the Maria and Muria Gonds and it will be noticed that these deities differ considerably from the Clan Gods of the Raj Gonds of Hyderabad.

<sup>2</sup> It is a moot point whether the *chawwur* and *sale* can individually be regarded as idols, or whether it would be safer to consider them only symbols: there can be no doubt, however, that the figure constructed of all the sacred objects and treated in many respects like a human being throughout the Persa Pen rites, can best be described as an idol in the same sense in which statues of Hindu deities with human or animal semblance are considered idols.

The original four phratries (*saga*) are believed to have later split into clans (*pari*) and then into sub-clans (*khandan*), and the Gonds explain that in the course of time each of the clans obtained a set of ritual objects and began to worship the Persa Pen of their phratry at separate sanctuaries. Thus it came about that shrines of clan-deities arose in many places and that there is now no clan (or sub-clan) which does not pride itself on the possession of its own Persa Pen.

Although on reflection all Gonds agree that the Persa Pen of the numerous clans within each phratry are in reality one and the same, they speak of them loosely as of so many separate deities, referring to each Persa Pen by the name of the clan or the locality of his sanctuary. Thus a man will speak of a Mesram or Kanaka Persa Pen, or more particularly of the Sitagondi Persa Pen, whose seat is on a hill near the village of Sitagondi. There are those Persa Pen who as long as human memory reaches have been moved in quick succession from one village to the other. Yet whether stationary or movable, most clan-deities are known by the locality which tradition associates with their origin and to the name of this place is added the suffix *-kar*<sup>1</sup>. The most ancient among the Persa Pen of the Atram clan is called Sitagondikar, and one worshipped by the Gond Raja of Chanda and his family is known as Chandakar, though now situated not in Chanda but in a village of Adilabad District. There are exceptions to this rule however; some Persa Pen take their name from events or objects connected with their origin: Korkar, god of another Atram sub-clan, takes its name from the horn (*kor*) of a buffalo killed by a legendary ancestor.

## II. CULT PLACE AND RITUAL OBJECTS

Before entering into the details of the complicated system of clans and sub-clans and their corresponding cult-centres, let us consider the essential features common to all Persa Pen irrespective of clan and phratry, the material setting and ritual observances of the cult.

Though it is more than probable that in the old days the sacred objects whose prototypes were given to the four phratries by Pahandi Kupa Lingal were kept in the midst of the forest, far from human habitation and the round of daily life, such seclusion is no longer practicable, and today the ritual objects are housed at no great distance from the village. If the Persa Pen is still located on the traditional clan-land, you will find the shrine attached to the settlement where the priest (*katora*) and the guardian of the god reside. The shrine may lie in a field or

<sup>1</sup> The suffix *-kar* is of Marathi origin, and many Maratha families are known by the name of a place plus the syllable *-kar*, which literally means 'belonging to.'

in the nearby jungle and in many cases the tombs,<sup>1</sup> of prominent clan-members are to be found in the vicinity. This shrine is of a traditional pattern which does not allow of much variation. It is a small oblong shed with a thatched roof, too low for a man to enter upright, the ridge-pole supported at either end by two stout posts, and the eaves by six or eight posts; in some of the older shrines the floor is built up of stone slabs, but in others it is a low earth dais, the surface plastered with cow-dung. The shrine is open on all sides and contains a low forked wooden post carrying between its three or more rarely four prongs a large earthen pot, covered with an upturned earthen saucer. This post (*kute*) is usually the natural triple fork of a teak tree, which is stripped of bark but otherwise unworked. Recent innovations, however, are squared carved posts decorated with incised patterns, the four arms joined by mortice and tenon. The earthen pot contains ritual objects used during the main cult acts: the whisk (*chauveur*), the brass bells, the red or white cloth and various smaller articles. Close to this post on a long board or a slightly raised mud platform, running parallel to the ridge-pole, lie the *sati*, small stones coated with red paint, and the *ban*, flat earthen saucers as used for oil lamps also much bedaubed by red paint and hardly recognizable. The *sati* whose number is generally equal to the clan's number of *wen*, represent legendary ancestors, whereas the *ban* commemorate members of the clan-priest's and clan-patel's family, whose decease occurred in more recent times and whose names can still be recalled. In addition to the essential contents of the shrine there may be other sacred objects which tradition associates with that particular deity, a drum hanging up under the roof, spears planted in the ground or an iron or brass lamp-stand standing beside the *sati* and *ban*. Quite often, however, the shrine is empty but for the pot, the *ban* and the *sati*, and in some shrines even these symbols are missing.

The most important of the Persa Pen symbols, the iron spear-point or *sale*, is never kept in the shrine, but is hidden after each ceremony in the forest in the branches of a mahua tree. Often a small crutch is made to house the *sale*, which is taken down at the time of the principal rites. Its hiding place is as a rule known only to the *katora* or clan priest and one or two of his closest kinsmen.

Some fifty to a hundred yards from the shrine lies the *pengara*, the gods' feast-place, and there are usually to be found the framework of two square booths. These shelters must be built of *Boswellia serrata* posts, which often take root and sprout so that the posts are crowned with leaves. At the time of feasts the

<sup>1</sup> Gond 'tombs' usually do not contain the corpse, but are cenotaphs erected over the place of cremation or funeral monuments, flags, *munda* (wooden posts) or tomb-shaped mounds.

framework is covered with leafy branches and the booths are used as sun-shelters, the larger by the Gonds and the smaller by the Pardhans.

These are the general characteristics of cult-places permanently located on the clan's hereditary land. Those Persa Pen that have been moved from their traditional site may no longer be associated with the symbols of the ancestors, for these may have remained on the old clan-land or at any intermediate stage of the Persa Pen's migration.

The *chawwur* and *sale* are more than mere objects required for the worship of the Persa Pen; they are symbols of deities who collectively form the clan-god. The *sale* or iron spearheads stand for the four 'brothers *sale*' whose cult was initiated while the Gonds' ancestors dwelt in Dhanegaon. Some myths depict these *biradar sale* as four gods coming bodily to Dhanegaon: Malesing Raitar, who became the god of the seven-brother folk; Rai Bandar, Renikunial Raitar, and Kati Kolasur Jeitur, who became respectively the gods of the six-, five- and four-brother folk. But other myths speak of the *sale* as iron spearheads or staves given to the Gonds by Pahandi Kupa Lingal as symbols of their Persa Pen, and tell of the manner in which he obtained them from either Vias Guru or Rev Guru. Myths of another cycle relate, however, that Rai Bandar and Badesara turned into *sale* at the moment of their deification, and there is little attempt to reconcile these two origins of *sale*. The myths tell, however, that the four original *sale* were later divided so that each of the Gond clans branching from the first four kin-groups should have a symbol of Persa Pen. We shall hear of other ways in which clans or sub-clans, newly sprung up, are believed to be able to secure new *sale* through the direct intervention of their Persa Pen, but in the normal course of events there is no need for the acquisition of new *sale*, for unlike *chawwur* they do not wear out. I have never met a Gond who knew from personal experience of the making or purchasing of a new *sale*, but there can be little doubt that all the existing *sale* are the work of blacksmiths, and when Gonds talk of their traditional association with the Khatis, they seldom omit to mention the Khatis' function of making the sacred *sale*, the Vias Guru, Hom Guru or Rev Guru of the myths being regarded as the first Khati.

The whisk or *chawwur* stands in most, though not in all cases for a female deity, such as Sungalturpo revered by the six-brother clans, and Manko worshipped by all five-brother clans as well as certain clans of the three other phratries; the hair is said to represent the long tresses of the goddesses. In some clans of the four, and seven-brother phratries both *sale* and *chawwur* are considered symbols of the god Kati Kolasur Jeitur and these *chawwur* are always white, whereas Sungalturpo and Manko are represented by black *chawwur*.

*Chauwur* bear a strong resemblance to the ceremonial fly-whisks used in Indian court ceremonial and temple ritual,<sup>1</sup> and those I have seen were evidently made of yak's hair. Since in time the hair disintegrates there is a recognized procedure by which such a sacred object can be replaced. The Gonds believe that the *chauwur* are the tails of *pen mura* or god's cows, wild animals that occur in a distant country. To become suitable symbols for a Persa Pen the tails must be severed without the animals being seriously harmed. The hunters therefore dig pits on trails which the *pen mura* are known to frequent and there lie in wait until a god's cow passes; then with one stroke of the knife they cut off its tail hair. Where exactly the *pen mura* and their hunters live, the Gonds do not know, but they do know that the tails may be purchased from shopkeepers of Wani caste at Chanda, Yeotmal and Amraoti.

When Gonds of Adilabad District want a new *chauwur* they usually go to Chanda where rows of whisks hang in the shops of Wanis. Carefully they choose one which seems suitable, black or white according to the deity it is to represent. The Wani ties a thread to the *chauwur* chosen and puts it back in its place in the row. Before going to sleep that night the Gonds bathe, and in their dreams the Persa Pen appears to one of them and either approves their choice or says: 'I am not in that *chauwur*—I am in the fourth (or fifth or sixth) in the row.' Next morning the Gonds return to the shop, and if their first choice was wrong, they point out the *chauwur* indicated by the deity and the shopkeeper again marks it with a thread. Once more the Gonds bathe and sleep, hoping for a sign from the Persa Pen; usually their dreams will either confirm or reject their choice and it is said that often the dreams of five nights may be necessary to exclude all doubt; but when at last the right *chauwur* has been established, they go to the shop-keeper, bow down, touch his feet in a deep reverence, and drop into the cloth which he holds ready, as many rupees as their clan has *wen*, one new cloth and a certain amount of grain. The Wani then hands over the *chauwur* and in return bows down and touches their feet. At the same time they also buy a new cloth, white or red, according to the deity, and a string of the same colour to bind the *chauwur* to a bamboo stave.

This bamboo stave is called *Kati* and has as many internodes as the clan has *wen*. A myth tells that the first *Kati* was brought from a clump of bamboos growing in the middle of the ocean.

<sup>1</sup> Fly-whisks (*chamara*) played and still play an important rôle in the ritual of many Hindu temples and the waving of these *chamara* for the god during the processions used to be the privilege of the *sani*, the female attendants of Hindu deities. It is not unlikely that the Gonds took over the fly-whisk from their Hindu neighbours, but that its significance changed gradually and what had been a ritual accessory became to be regarded as a symbol of the deity.



The brass bells (*gagra*) kept in every Persa Pen shrine are globular round pellet bells, with a slit mouth opening. They are tied into one bunch, and their number corresponds to the number of *wen* of the phratry, this being four, five, six or seven. As in a myth of Pahandi Kupaṅg Lingal they were obtained from a Wojari, so today the Gonds have them made to order by brass founders of Wojari caste. Their sanctity is not as great as that of *chauwur* and *sale*, and they do not represent any deity or mythical figure.

We shall see presently how during great Persa Pen feasts, whisk, spearhead, brass bells and cloth are tied to a bamboo stave, and how thus a figure is created which throughout the rites is treated with the greatest reverence as the idol of the Persa Pen. To minister to this idol is the task of the *katora*, the hereditary clan-priest, who plays the foremost rôle in the many rites and ceremonies constituting the cult of the clan-god.

### III. THE CLAN PRIEST

What is the mythical sanction of the *katora's* office? Pahandi Kupaṅg Lingal is addressed by the goddess Jangu Bai as the *katora* of all the Gond gods, and it was he who instructed the Gonds' ancestors in the worship of the Persa Pen. When they were divided into four phratries he appointed to each a *katora* and with these *katora* the Gonds migrated to the four villages which were to be the first stage in the process of their final dispersal.

Today we find in each clan and sub-clan one family in which the office of *katora* is hereditary. Usually the dignity passes from father to eldest son, but if necessary any member of the family can function and there are instances of distant kinsmen raising rival claims to the position of *katora*. No special knowledge or ability is required to fulfil a *katora's* tasks, and the gift of becoming the mouthpiece of a deity during a state of trance is in no way connected with a *katora's* function. The duties of the clan-priest, though enormously important in establishing harmonious relations between the living clan-members and invisible forces including the spirits of ancestors and departed, in no way overlap with those of the *bhaktal* or seer, who can cut straight through the bar separating the worlds of human beings and spirits.

The *katora's* primary task is tending the ritual objects of his Persa Pen and the shrine sheltering them, and he is responsible for hiding the *sale*, the sacred spear-point, after each feast. If his clan-god is movable, he is free to transfer the sacred objects to wherever he may choose to reside. The organization of the great clan-feasts and all other rites and ceremonies proper to the worship of the Persa Pen lie mainly in his hands, and if he neglects them or shows himself incompetent, another member of his family may claim the office and will usually find supporters among the

clan-members. The two principal Persa Pen feasts are held in the months of Bawe (May-June) and Pus (December-January), and a minor ceremony is often performed at the time of Dassera. Before each of the two great feasts the *katora* sets out to collect contributions from the clan-members, a task which often involves a considerable amount of travelling; at the same time he announces the time of the ceremony. Those who will attend the feast make no cash contributions and bring their own sacrificial animals and food offerings, but clan-members unable to join in the celebrations give the *katora* animals to sacrifice or any sum between a few annas and several rupees with which to buy animals to offer to the deity in their name. At the annual feasts, which will presently be described in full, the *katora* acts throughout as the priest, not so much as the mediator between the community and the godhead, than as the representative of the community; at the most decisive phases of the worship, he steps back into the circle of the worshippers and prays with them and as one of them.

But there are times other than the great feasts when the *katora* fulfils important functions. Together with the Pardhan of the the Persa Pen he keeps a mental record of all the members of his clan or sub-clan, and if any of them dies without near relations or in some distant place he must perform the ceremonies necessary to join their souls (*sanal*) to the Persa Pen and the company of the departed kinsmen.

All those Gonds who can possibly afford the expense perform for their deceased relatives elaborate memorial feasts (*pitre*) and moreover sacrifice a goat described as *tum*-goat to their Persa Pen, thereby mingling the soul of the recently departed with the clan-deity and the ancestors. But as some people die without relatives able or willing thus to provide for the comfort of their souls, the *katora* performs a simple rite every Kartik month whereby these too are included in the community of the departed clan-members. Then he sacrifices in his own house a chicken from each of the clan-members who have died during that year and have remained unprovided for by any memorial rite; then he spreads flour on the floor of his verandah to discover what shape the spirit (*jiv*) of each individual has taken.<sup>1</sup> No public memorial rite may be performed for women who die in pregnancy, and the souls of such women too are joined to the clan-deity by the *katora's* general rite in Kartik. If a man has gone to live in some far away village and his death is rumoured, the *katora* entrusts his Pardhan with the task of discovering his fate, and only performs the rites if his death is confirmed.

In times of illness a *katora* is sometimes approached by a

<sup>1</sup> Gonds differentiate between the *sanal*, the soul, which joins the company of the Persa Pen and the Departed and is believed to partake of food-offerings, and the *jiv*, the life-spirit which goes to Shri Shembu and may be reborn in either man or animal.

member of his clan who wishes to know whether his illness is due to the displeasure of a deceased kinsman whose soul needs propitiating. Then the *katora* goes to the Persa Pen shrine and prays for enlightenment. Often, it is said, the Persa Pen will come upon him and answer his questions, but not all *katora* are capable of such trance experiences, and never is possession by a Persa Pen as violent as by Bhimana, Jangu Bai and certain other deities. Those *katora* who never show signs of the mental state which Gonds interpret as possession by a deity—and we have mentioned already that such a psychic disposition is not required of a *katora*—may still have the capacity for dreams of a symbolic nature. To them the Persa Pen appears in the shape of a *katora* riding on a horse, either white or black according to the colour of their *chauvur*.

The *katora's* wife, the *katore*, too has certain ritual functions; at the New Eating ceremonies of the small millets, it is she who does the ritual cooking of the new millet in whosoever's house the clan-members among the villagers assemble for the rite, and on feast days she cleans and plasters the *sati* shrine with cow-dung.

Besides the *katora*, who has both to minister at the sacrificial rites and to tend the sacred objects, there is usually still another guardian of the clan-deity who is today described as the Persa Pen's *patla* or *patel*. Originally he was probably the hereditary headman of the locality containing the shrine of the deity and was thus partly responsible for its protection and upkeep. Nowadays the family may no longer furnish the village headman, but still retain the old religious function. The *patel's* duties are not clearly defined; he usually lends a hand in the organization of the feasts in honour of the clan-god, and there are cases where the shrine is in his village while the *katora* lives in some other village and comes only during the times of the feasts.

Moreover some clan-deities stand under the special protection of a family of Rajas, and even where these have lost all secular influence they are still known as 'rajas' *vis-à-vis* the Persa Pen; during the annual rites their rôle is slightly different from that of ordinary clan-members.

The fourth and by no means least important of the functionaries responsible for the performance of the rites and ceremonies in the traditional manner is the Pardhan of the Persa Pen, who is at the same time generally the House Pardhan of the *katora*. Long before the annual feasts are due to start he assists the *katora* in collecting contributions from distant clan-members, sometimes accompanying him and sometimes touring their villages on his own. Once the ceremonies have begun, his is a vital rôle. During the central rite when the god-head is near and the drums and trumpets die reverently, the soft sounds of his fiddle swing through the stillness, and his voice, never raised, intones the ancient hymns that express the mystery of the rites, the unity of

all clan-members and their union with the Persa Pen. And afterwards when, the ritual completed, the clansmen and villagers relax in the enjoyment of the feast, he recites with his two assistants, who are usually his sons or brother's sons, the sacred myths of the origin of the Gonds and his own clan-deities. He is the repository of tradition, and though many Gonds may have a fairly good knowledge of their clan-myths, only he knows how to recite the epics in their full poetic form. True, in case of emergency, when the hereditary bard of the Persa Pen is unable to attend the feast and no member of his own family or sub-clan is there to take his place, a Pardhan of another clan but of the same phratry, may be hired to play at the ceremonies; his performance is however devoid of all sanctity, and important phases of the ritual must be omitted.

The clan-priest, the guardian of the Persa Pen, the Pardhan and to a lesser degree the raja, are all responsible for the performance of the rites for the Persa Pen, on which the well-being of the clan depends. But the responsibility is not theirs alone; the feast is the concern of the whole clan and particularly of the clan-members residing in the village where the shrine of the Persa Pen is located. For the annual rites sustain and strengthen the unity of the clan and secure the blessing of the Persa Pen and the Departed for man and crops. Among all the numerous religious ceremonies of the Gonds they rank foremost, not only in the importance attached to them by the Gonds and the reverence displayed in their performance, but also in the elaboration and expense of the ritual. The violent quarrels between rival sections of a clan for the privilege of conducting the rites and housing the Persa Pen in their village lands, are, though defeating the unifying function of the cult, convincing proof of the Gonds' belief in the powerful forces inherent in the ritual objects and released during the performance of the rites. For side by side with the idea of the invisible deity in whose cult *chaurour* and *sale* are only instrumental symbols, there is also the firm belief in the supernatural virtue of these objects which exert of themselves a beneficial influence on their surroundings.

#### IV. THE CLAN DEITIES AND THEIR MYTHICAL BACKGROUND

Who are the deities beyond these visible symbols, in themselves so full of magical power? The answer to this question is not simple, for the myths sung by Pardhans and the prayers said at the annual rites seem to tell different tales. Most of these myths describe the transformation of human or semi-human personages into deities with *chaurour* and *sale* as their tangible symbols. When questioned both Gonds and Pardhans say that these deities, usually a duality of a male and a female deity, are their Persa Pen, and it is significant that they use invariably the singular form *pen* and not the plural *penk*, though in other connections two or more

gods are referred to as *penk*. In prayers and songs the corresponding verbs stand in the singular form, which is used with feminine and neuter subjects, whereas verbs corresponding to such definitely male gods as Sri Shembu Mahadeo stand in the masculine form. Manko and Bandesara, though treated before their deification as two separate human beings and referred to by verbs in the corresponding masculine and feminine forms, are from the moment of their metamorphosis described collectively as *pen* or *raitar* in the singular form with verbs also in singular feminine—neuter forms. Yet in the prayers at the great clan-god feasts the worshippers use the general terms 'Persa Pen' and 'Raitar' as well as such individual names as Manko and Bandesara.

I have never been able to make a Gond or Pardhan quite see the inconsistency in this description of two divine figures, male and female, as a single *pen* used with verbs in the singular, nor has any Gond or Pardhan, however well versed in religious lore, ever been able to offer a satisfactory explanation.

The general belief among the Gonds is that the members of each of the four phratries worship their own deities, whose origin and history is known in detail only to the Pardhans and some Gonds of that phratry. But no complete agreement exists between the Pardhans of various clans, and different myths of origin are told by Pardhans of one and the same phratry.

Let us review briefly what the myths tell of the nature of the individual Persa Pen.

The mythical figures worshipped by all members of the five-brother phratry are Manko and her son Bandesara. Though Renikunial Raitar is mentioned in one myth as the original *biradar sale* of the five-brother folk, this name is nowadays never invoked in prayers. Manko was the daughter of a *rakshasa* and wife of Dundria Raur, the legendary chief of the five-brother folk. Expelled by Dundria Raur in anger over the disgrace she brought on his house by her *rakshasa* habits, she went into exile and there gave birth to a son, Bandesara, who was reared by water-spirits. When drought and famine smote Dundria Raur's village, he recalled his wife at the advice of the goddess Jangu Bai. But at the boundary of Gudmasur Patera, the village of Dundria Raur, both Manko and Bandesara turned into gods, in place of their human forms appeared a *chawwur* and a *sale*, and henceforth they were worshipped as the Persa Pen of the Raur folk.

The Pandwen Saga, which comprises the clans sprung from the original six brothers, worships Sungalturpo and her son Rai Bandar, whose fate and deification resemble in many ways those of Manko and Bandesara. Sungalturpo was the daughter of a Maravi man and wife of Voyal Koinda Voja who had led the six-brother folk from Dhanegaon to Jantokorvelikinagur. Doubting Sungalturpo's faithfulness he drove her from his house and, in exile in the company of tigers, she gave birth to a son whom she

called Rai Bandar. Misfortune made Voyal Koinda Voja regret his rash action and he sent his Pardhan in search of Sungalturpo. After twelve years she was found, but when she approached Jamtokorvelikinagur, she and her son Rai Bandar turned into gods. *Chauwur* and *sale* appeared miraculously in their stead and with these symbols the Gonds of Jamtokorvelikinagur started to worship Sungalturpo and Rai Bandar as their Persa Pen. Here as in the previous myth the rites in honour of the Persa Pen are effective in ending the calamity and restoring prosperity to the worshippers.

The seven-brother clans, with the single exception of the Buigoita branch of the Mesram clan, worship as Persa Pen Malesing Raitar, one of the original *biradar sale* and still represented by an iron spearhead. Though occurring in several myths among the gods invoked by the seven brothers, little else is known about his origin. Associated with the *sale* standing for Malesing Raitar is in some clans a black *chauwur*, representing Manko, and the worship of the deity so definitely linked with the five-brother folk is explained by her visit to the seven Panior brothers at the time of her expulsion from Gudmasur Patera. Then she gave the Panior brothers in return for gifts of friendship, a lock of her hair, and the black *chauwur* revered by many seven-brother clans symbolizes the hair of Manko.

Among the four-brother clans Kati Kolasur Jeitur is worshipped as the original *biradar sale*, but is, in some obscure way, also symbolized by a white *chauwur*. No myth known to the Gonds of Adilabad tells very much of the origin and nature of this deity, who does not fall into line with such deities as Sungalturpo and Rai Bandar. The peculiar position of Kati Kolasur Jeitur finds expression in the custom which forbids woman to come anywhere near the white *chauwur*. Unlike the symbol of Manko, which is taken to the houses of the worshippers, the white *chauwur* of Kati Kolasur Jeitur may not even be brought to a village, so dangerous to women is the god believed to be.

Just as the black *chauwur* symbolizing Manko are kept with the ritual objects of Persa Pen of seven- as well as four-brother clans, so white *chauwur* as symbols of Kati Kolasur Jeitur are revered also by some six-brother clans.

The phratry or sub-phratry, which breaks the regularity of the four kin-groups (*saga*) is the Sarpe *Saga*, consisting of the eight clans worshipping the goddess Jangu Bai. Descended from a tigress, and born after the ancestors of the other Gonds had been liberated from the primeval cave, the forefather of this *saga* has, according to the myths, no direct connection with the four other phratries. But today the eight clans of the Sarpe *Saga* are reckoned for purposes of exogamy among those of the six-brother phratry, and in their Persa Pen cult they use a set of six bells and a bamboo stave of six nodes. Both their *sale* and

their white *chauwur* are said to represent Jangu Bai, but there can be no doubt that Jangu Bai stands on a level quite different from that of the Persa Pen of other phratries.

Certain clans of the Sarpe *Saga* possess not only a white *chauwur* but also a black *chauwur* representing Manko, and this suggests the idea that some of the deities figuring prominently in the Persa Pen cult have no exclusive link with any particular phratry, but are worshipped singly and in pairs by clans of various phratries. Indeed the possibility cannot be excluded that the deities represented by *chauwur* and *sale* are but tutelary gods and deified ancestors associated with Persa Pen who, on the other hand, are not symbolized by any material object and are devoid of individual names.

While the traditional ritual of the Persa Pen cult is based on the existence of a *chauwur* as well as a *sale*, and the overwhelming majority of clans and sub-clans is in possession of both these objects, there are a few exceptional cases of clans lacking either the one or the other and yet performing most of the Persa Pen rites according to the usual pattern. A most remarkable instance of a Persa Pen without a *chauwur* is that of the clan god of the Purka clan belonging to the seven-*wen* phratry.

The shrine of the Purka Persa Pen lies on the hill Wotegarh, overlooking the Moar valley, which in the old times was surmounted by a fort belonging to the Purka people. Today only remnants of the old fort still stand, and the *katora* lives at the foot of the hill in the village of Ballarpur. Tradition tells that the original home of the Purka clan was farther to the east in the present taluq of Both, and that at the time when their clansmen first settled on Wotegarh hill, they brought with them a *sale* and a white *chauwur* whose haft carried a golden band. Both *sale* and *chauwur* represented Kati Kolasur Jeitur, or, according to some clan-members, Kati Kolasur Jeitur and his wife, who had no separate name of her own. Once during the annual Persa Pen feast, after they had taken *sale* and *chauwur* for the ritual bath in the sacred black waters of the Moar river and returned to the hilltop of Wotegarh to start the sacrificial rites, the *chauwur* refused the offerings of chickens and goats and cows, and demanded through the mouth of the seer the sacrifice of a "two-legged goat." The Purka men understood well enough that a human sacrifice was demanded, but rather than comply they rushed the *chauwur* from the village and carried it to distant Daregaon on the banks of the Penganga, and threw the *chauwur* together with bells, cloth and bamboo into the river.<sup>1</sup> Then they returned to Wotegarh and continued the

<sup>1</sup> This alleged reluctance of the Purka people to comply with the deity's demand for a human sacrifice, should not be taken as an indication that all Gonds have always been averse to human sacrifice; indeed this custom has survived until recent times. Cf. C. von Fürer-Haimendorf, 'Beliefs concerning Human Sacrifice among the Hill Reddis', *Man in India*, Vol. XXIV (1944), p. 27.

ceremonies, sacrificing a goat and a cow before the *ale*. Ever since all the rites have been performed without *chauwur*, bells, cloth or bamboo-stick, and without resulting in any ill effects to the people of the Purka clan. It is generally believed that only clan-deities with ritual objects made of gold are prone to demand human sacrifices, and no other clan-god is attributed nowadays with the desire for human victims,<sup>1</sup> for the sacred bells are made by Wojaris of brass.

The idea is widespread, however, that the great power of a Persa Pen, set free during the rites of a feast, can work for evil as well as for good and become dangerous to bystanders. Thus it is said that the great Atram Persa Pen of Sitagondi is no longer carried to the Pedda Vagu for the ritual bath, because people in the villages on the way were killed by the god. Even to worshippers the Persa Pen might prove dangerous were it not for the magical power of the Pardhan's fiddle, which charms and intimidates the god, just as the music of the Pardhan of the myths tamed the terrible Persa Pen, when the Gonds began his worship.

While in the case of the Purka Persa Pen the *chauwur* is missing, the Rai Siram Persa Pen at Mangi lacks a *sale*, and it is believed that the original *sale* of the clan never left Pahiramunda in the Central Provinces, the original *watan*, when a section of the clan migrated southwards. That even both *sale* and *chauwur* can be dispensed with in the Persa Pen rites is proven by the Persa Pen of the Banda sub-section of the Pendur clan. The shrine of the Persa Pen is in Both taluq and contains neither *chauwur* nor *sale*; a sacred stone (*banda*) is the principal ritual object and like *chauwur* and *sale* elsewhere, this stone is carried about in procession.

How clan-gods without *sale* or *chauwur* have come into being is well illustrated by an occurrence of recent years. The Persa Pen of the Borikar section of the Pendur clan was originally at Bori in Chanda District; some generations ago it was brought to Garh Jamni in Rajura Taluq. From there the ritual objects were taken to Garh Nokari and guarded by the god's patel Pondur Polu. Five years ago there was a quarrel between the clan-members; the *katora* Malku seized the *sale* and took it to Hatloni, a village in the plains, but the *patel* Polu refused to let the *chauwur* go, and continues to celebrate the annual feasts. At these he uses a brass vessel of long association with the other ritual objects as a substitute for the *sale*, and this is carried around with the *chauwur* and plays the rôle proper to the *sale*. The *katora*, on the other hand, who is in possession of the *sale*, performs no public ceremonies, and few know where he keeps it hidden.

Further back lies a dispute connected with the Kotnaka

<sup>1</sup> The Era Kumra and Marapa clans of the Sarpe *Saga* have, however the tradition that on one occasion their ancestors sacrificed humans to Jangu Bai.



clan-god which also resulted in the setting up of two separate cult-centres. It is said that many generations ago, during a Persa Pen feast held at Bari, the old *watan* of the Kotnaka clan, the *katora* ran short of water just as he was about to offer the sacrificial food. He bade his younger brother go quickly to the well. Meanwhile the first cock crowed and the *katora*, fearing that the sun might rise before the rites were completed, hurriedly offered the food to the godhead omitting the obligatory sprinkling of freshly drawn water. When the younger brother returned to find the ceremony over, he abused the *katora* for continuing the rites in his absence, and in the ensuing quarrel seized upon a sacred stone kept always with the ritual objects and ran off to another village. Many generations ago this stone had been brought from the sacred Sasarakunda Falls and the *katora*'s brother employed it in setting up a cult-centre of his own; he used the stone instead of a *sale* and brought a new *chauwur* from Chanda; the sub-clan established became known as Warakar.<sup>1</sup>

We have heard already how new *chauwur* may be bought from shop-keepers of Wani caste. New *sale* cannot be obtained so easily and I was frequently assured that it would be useless to order a *sale* from a blacksmith.<sup>2</sup> The Gonds believe, however, that men of special merit are capable of coming by new *sale*: they may find one in the forest leaning against a mahua tree or in their heaped grain on their threshing floors after harvest. No such cases have occurred in recent times, but it is said that in the past, when the younger brother or son of a clan-priest set out to found a new clan-centre, he prayed to his Persa Pen and if his prayer was granted he found a *sale* while walking through the forest or when measuring his threshed grain. Clan-deities with *sale* found in grain are therefore called Jawa Pen—*jawa* being the gruel constituting the Gonds' staple food.

With this we come to the classification of clan-deities into Persa Pen, Jawa Pen, and—as a third variety—Sawere Pen. In daily use every clan-deity is referred to as Persa Pen, but in theory there is a difference between the original Persa Pen of a clan, whether still on the old clan-land or not, and the younger offshoots established by the founders of sub-clans and known as Jawa Pen. This difference is of very little practical importance and finds no expression in any variation of ritual, the feasts for both Persa and Jawa Pen being performed on identical lines. Where the sub-clans have long been separated one may even experience difficulties in discovering which of the clan-deities is

<sup>1</sup> The explanation for this name as given by the Gonds seems rather far-fetched; they say that the sacred objects of the Persa Pen, including the stone, were laid out in the *wara*, a walled courtyard, and stolen from there; hence the name Warakar.

<sup>2</sup> This view is, of course, inconsistent with the idea that the original *sale* were made by Rev Guru, the first Khati.

a Persa Pen and which are Jawa Pen, for the members of a sub-clan are often loath to admit the relative status of their own clan-god. Yet when the clan's Persa Pen is still at the original clan-centre, such as the Atram Persa Pen at Sitagondi, his superior antiquity and status is generally recognized, even by the members of other sub-clans. Sawere Pen are only found in possession of raja families, and it is said that in the old times the *chauwur* and *sale* of such deities were carried into battle when the rajas went to war. Today the rôle of the Sawere Pen is not clearly defined, for while some Sawere Pen have become the centres of new sub-clans such as the Sirpurkar Sawere Pen of the Atram clan, others remain little more than house-gods, or at the best subsidiary clan-deities and their adherents continue to worship their original Persa Pen. Thus the Atram Raja family of Pangri, the village at the foot of the Sitagondi hill, worships both the Persa Pen of Sitagondi and a Sawere Pen of its own, which is housed in a shrine near the raja's homestead.

Associated with the Persa Pen of the clans of certain rajas and *mokashi* are deities that symbolize the secular power of the rulers and are known as Betal Pen. These are represented by five stones and sometimes a flag set on a hilltop, the stones being arranged in a square with one in the middle. Unlike the *sati* and *ban*, the Betal Pen is not a deified ancestor, but a 'god of Devastan.' The Mokashi of Kara Kampa, for instance, has a Betal Pen on a hill near his ancient seat of residence. At the full moon of Divali Gonds, Pardhans and Kolams assemble on that hill before the stones symbolizing the Betal Pen; close by there are flags and earthen and brass figures of horses and horse-men with bows, all brought there in fulfilment of vows. Only men participate in the sacrificial rite, which culminates in the slaughter of goats and chickens. In stories and traditions the square of the Betal is the place where men are possessed by the Betal Pen and in the thrall of the godhead perform sword and spear dances; they jump from one stone to the other until at last they leap on to the central stone, brandishing their weapons. A modified form of these spear and sword dances can still be seen at the end of many Persa Pen feasts, when before the *chauwur* and *sale* are put away young men possessed by the Betal Pen seize spears and swords kept with the ritual objects of the clan-deities and dance fiercely on any level piece of ground near the *pen-gara*. Some Gonds say now that the Betal Pen dwells in these sacred weapons, but this view is not generally accepted and may be due to a shifting of ideas following the abandonment of the sites with the original Betal stones.

#### V. A PERSA PEN FEAST

There are few ritual occasions when a Gond will not invoke his Persa Pen, but the principal acts of worship, when the

clanmembers gather at the cult-centre to sacrifice cows, goats and chickens, are performed in the month of Bhawe (April-May) and Pus (December-January). In the following I will describe the rites held at Marlavai in honour of the clan-god of the Kanaka clan, a clan of the five-brother phratry. The ritual objects, which had previously been kept in a neighbouring village, were brought to Marlavai only shortly before the feast and the rites included therefore their installation in a newly established shrine and *pen-gara*.

Until then the sacred objects remained at the Aki Pen, the Village Guardian, hidden in a large earthen pot in which they had been carried to Marlavai. There was considerable delay over the start of the ceremonies. A cow and goats for slaughter had to be procured, clan-members and the indispensable Pardhans had to be summoned. At last when all was ready, the wives of two important Kanaka men of Marlavai menstruated, and since this would have prevented their husbands from participating in the ceremonies, it was decided to hold up the proceedings till both women had ended their period.

On the day after the full moon all preparations for the ceremonies were completed. With the moon rising over the edge of the wooded ridge and quiet reigning in the village, six men went silently to the Aki post and lit a small fire. They were Kanaka Lachu, in whose family the function of *katora* or clan-priest had long been hereditary, Kanaka Kodu, who claims descent from a line of Kanaka Rajas, Kanaka Badu, whose family furnishes traditionally the *patel* of the Persa Pen, and three men of clans standing in marriage relations with the Kanaka people. Carefully they took the sacred objects from the pot, bathed them with water and then sacrificed a chicken; they offered a small piece of roasted liver to the deity, cooked and ate the chicken on the spot and then, having replaced the sacred objects in the pot, returned to the village as silently as they had come. While this initial rite was being performed in the fields before the Aki Pen, lights were lighted in the shrines of Bhimana, Rajul Pen and Daul Malkal.

Next morning at the first cock's crow the roar of drums and the wail of Pardhan trumpets pierced the stillness. The men of Kanaka clan and a few other villagers had already assembled at the Aki Pen and the shrine of Mora Auwal, whose worship was also to be performed that day, and simultaneously they sacrificed a fowl to both Persa Pen and Auwal. The *katora* conducted the rite for the Persa Pen and addressed the deity with a prayer for protection against all dangers.

We give you chicken, eggs, and sweetened *dal*,  
May fortune favour us.  
Crush our enemies under your foot,  
Going in front, coming behind,

May your blessing shield us ;  
 May we meet with no tigers,  
 May they flee from us,  
 Seeing us, may they run away.

This prayer said, small pieces of roasted liver and millet brought cooked from the houses, were offered on *mura*-leaves<sup>1</sup> to the deities. While at the pot of the Persa Pen only men of Kanaka clan partook of the chicken, the assembly at the Auwal shrine was less exclusive, and men of several clans shared in the meal of chicken curry and millet.

Dawn blunted the fine points of the stars as the worshippers returned to their houses, where they snatched a little rest before the ceremonies began. In the early part of the morning there was little activity in the village; a few young men and boys erected a sun-shelter in front of Kanaka Kodu's house and covered it according to custom with fresh branches of *Eugenia jambolana*, while a few men squatted idly round the Persa Pen pot, which must never be left unattended.

When the people had eaten their breakfast porridge, most of of the men gathered on the newly ploughed field where the great pot containing the ritual objects still stood before the Aki post, The *katora* Lachu, with several young men of his own clan as well as of *soira* clans, now opened the pot: they took out the sacred whisk (*chauwur*) of the goddess Manko, the spearhead (*sale*)<sup>2</sup> of her son Bandesara, a set of five large brass bells and nine stones thickly covered with red paint, the *sati* or symbols of ancestors. The first task was to wash the black whisk with four substances: they brought four little brass vessels filled with water, cow's urine, cow's milk and oil and while Kodapa Kasi held the whisk over a brass basin, the *katora* and other helpers poured each in turn over the rich black hair, then they combed it with their fingers and rubbed it energetically till it was dry; lastly oil was brought in a leaf-cup and poured carefully over the hair till it shone in the sun. In a similar manner they washed the sacred spearhead and finally the brass bells, five in number, corresponding to the five *wen* of the Kanaka clan. Meanwhile two large heavy-headed spears were brought from the *patel's* house and leant against the Aki post beside a small ritual spear (*bard-gorka*) belonging to the god's cult objects, which had stood erect ever since it had been brought to Marlavai together with the symbols of the Persa Pen.

The ceremonial bathing over, the *katora* and his *soira*, young men of six-brother clans,<sup>3</sup> took the other sacred objects from the

<sup>1</sup> *Butea frondosa*.

<sup>2</sup> Normally the *sale* is never kept in the pot with the other ritual objects, but on this occasion it had been put into the pot for the transfer to Marlavai.

<sup>3</sup> Gonds refer to all paternal kinsmen and to the members of those clans with which they may not intermarry as *saga*, and to all potential mates and relations-in-law as *soira*. It is duty and privilege of the *soirā* to bathe and assemble the symbols of the Persa Pen in readiness for the rites.

pot : a red cloth with tasselled end, a small strip of cloth round the head of a bamboo with five nodes ; over this he tied the red cloth and fitted on the hollow haft of the whisk, so that the black hair fell over the upper edge of the cloth. The brass bells were tied tightly to the head of the bamboo under the hair, and then the *katora* picked up the sacred spearhead and reverently tied it to the bamboo, under the cloth.

The idol was now ready for the ceremonies, and the *katora*, grasping it in two hands, planted the bamboo firmly in the ground beside the Aki post. There it stood, slightly shorter than a man, glistening black hair streaming and red cloth billowing in the breeze, while men and boys quickly grouped themselves into a semi-circle, open to the east. To one side the Pardhans and two Gond drummers squatted with their instruments. Kanaka Chitru, the white-moustached Pardhan of the Persa Pen, had hung up his fiddle on his short spear, *kaniyal gorka*, thrust into the ground, but now he took it down and began tuning, while his son and nephew wetted the mouth-pieces of their trumpets, and two Gonds tilted their cylindrical, double-membrane drums, while a third put an iron kettle drum between his legs. Suddenly drums thundered, trumpets blared, and the *katora* took his place in front of the idol, dropped a few grains of incense on a piece of smouldering wood, waved it twice in front of the idol and raised it to chin-level as he stood a few moments, motionless before the deity, silently praying : then he went round the semi-circle of worshippers from left to right and as he passed the Gonds cupped their hands over the embers as though gathering some of the fragrance in their palms ; replacing the incense before the idol, the *katora* stepped back into the semi-circle. All stood a few moments with folded hands praying silently for protection and prosperity, in much the same terms as they had done earlier in the morning. At the end of the prayer, as at one command, they threw themselves full length on the ground, remaining face downwards for a moment, and then stood up again.

The *katora* now went up to the idol and with a single movement wrenched the bamboo from the ground, while two of his *soira* shouldered the large spears, and several young boys of *soira* clans picked up the baskets with the *sati* stones and other ritual objects. Led by the *katora* carrying the Persa Pen, the bearers of the sacred objects made the round of the semi-circle, greeting each man with a formal embrace and the words *Ram, Ram*. As the *katora* solemnly paced from man to man, he softly shook the idol so that the five brass bells tinkled incessantly ; the Pardhans played to it on *kingri* and trumpets, and the drummers kept up a subdued tremolo. Some of the worshippers simply returned the *katora's* embrace and saluted with folded hands, others bowed down and touched his feet with their forehead, while two men possessed of the godhead as the idol approached, threw themselves to the

ground, their bodies trembling in the grip of an invisible force. Even after the *katora's* passing they could not rise, but continued to writhe and jerk on the sun-baked furrows. The round of greetings completed, the *katora* went up to the Pardhan, who rose and returned his embrace, reverently touching the sacred whisk.

Whereas the *sati*-shrine, which was later to house the pot with the ritual objects, had been built several days before at no great distance from the shrines of Bhimana and Rajul Pen, the *pen-gara*, the site where the rites were to take place, had not yet been chosen. All the materials had been kept in readiness for the booths, but newly arrived in the village the Persa Pen itself must choose the site for the feast-place. So that the divine will might be revealed, the idol was handed to Kursenga Madu, the *bhaktal* or seer of the village. More sensitive than other mortals to supernatural voices he was at once filled with the power of the godhead and began swaying violently to and fro. Holding the sacred symbols in both hands and supported by two men he led the procession across the fields to the shrines of Bhimana, Rajul Pen and Daul Malkal. Young men danced ahead, leaping and running and brandishing swords, and behind him thronged the crowd of worshippers tense with excitement, the Pardhan playing fiddle and trumpets to the roar of two powerful drums. There was but a short halt at the shrines, and then the procession pushed forward into the open fields. Two places already envisaged for the *pen-gara* were refused by the deity, who tore the *bhaktal* away each time he paused on a likely site; but the third place was favoured and the *bhaktal* stood there quivering until a spear had been thrust into the ground and the idol firmly tied to it. A little to one side two men dug a deep hole, and others going to the jungle, brought back a flat stone and laid it beside the hole; this hole symbolized the primaeval cave in which the Gonds' ancestors were imprisoned whereas the stone symbolized the slab with which Sri Shembu had blocked its entrance. Throughout this and all following feasts the remains of any substance which has come in touch with the idol, such as for instance water and milk used in washing the sacred objects and the remains of the sacrificial food, are thrown into this hole. In the meantime men were hurriedly bringing the wooden posts and fresh branches to build the two shelters required at the festival, and in about an hour and a half the stout posts, nine for the bigger shelter and four for the smaller, were up, roofed with horizontal beams and covered with branches of *Eugenia jambolana*.

When the sun stood high overhead—a time reserved on other days for rest in houses or the shade of trees—the men gathered at the *pen-gara*; the great semi-circle of *saga* and *soira* fanned out to worship the god with prayer and prostration. Then began the round of the village, when the Persa Pen visits the shrines of the village gods, the stalls of the village cattle, the streams and

wells where the villagers draw water and the houses of the *katora* and *patel*. Uprooting the idol, the *katora* carried it once round the shelters; following came men with spears, swords, trumpets and drums. The whole procession moved to the god-shrines, where the sacred objects of Mora Auwal, belonging to Kanaka Moti and recently brought to Marlavai, stood still in the open under a small *dondera* tree. The crowd halted and the *katora* plunged the bamboo with the whisk into the earth beside the symbols of the mother-deity, a bunch of peacock feathers in a carved wooden holder. Then he sprinkled men and shrines with water and all men greeted Mora Auwal by making a deep reverence with folded hands.

A moment later a shiver convulsed the body of Kursenga Madu the seer, and as he staggered unsteadily backwards and forwards, it became evident that once more he was possessed of the godhead. Brass anklets were hastily tied to his ankles and three rope whips with brass bells at the handles were laid across his shoulders. Crouching, twitching, painfully moving, he slowly gained the bunch of peacock-feathers, grasped it between both hands. Then the drums thundered and he raised himself and with uncertain steps danced round and round the small open space before the shrine. But this phase soon came to an end; idols and cult objects were taken up and carried in procession across the sunbaked plough-land towards the Aki Pen. Boys swinging curved swords rushed ahead of the swiftly moving crowd, a compact group some ten men abreast. The *katora*, carrying the Persa Pen with its ever jingling bells, and the *bhaktal*, with the peacock-feathers of Mora Auwal swaying, still under the influence of the godhead, headed the procession with arms linked while the fiddle-playing Pardhan kept close to their side. The great heavy-headed spears, their arm-long points newly anointed with oil, flashed in the front line, and the drummers, their instruments strapped to their shoulders, made up the right wing, while young men carrying baskets full of ceremonial accessories, the *sati* stones, clay horses and other ritual objects on their heads, kept slightly behind. All wore white *dhoti*, a few men shirts and others coats of various colour, while over their turbans many had tied white or coloured scarfs, and these hung loosely on the shoulder or were tied under the chin.

Storming across the clods of the ploughed fields the procession came first to the Aki, where water and cooked, sweetened *dal* were sprinkled, and the *katora* stepping up to the altar bent forward so that the bells of the Persa Pen jingled and the long black hair all but touched the post; the Persa Pen greeted the Village Guardian. Now the procession moved on. In front went two young men intent on leading it on its prescribed pilgrimage of all the sacred places, sprinkling the path with newly drawn water and *dal*, cooked and sweetened with sugar. But often it seemed

as though *katora* and seer were torn by the godhead in another direction; suddenly they would halt, veer round and dart off at a tangent, young men hanging on their arms to stay their progress; and the spear-carriers lifting their weapons over the tops of the idols, lunged forward to point the way. Owing to the violent impulses of the godhead the procession had often to retrace its steps. On the edge of the ploughed field it turned into a narrow street flanked by cattle-sheds; *dal* and water were scattered before each doorway, and the jostling crowd paused before each entrance while the *katora*, bending forward, stepped over the threshold, violently shaking the idol so that the brass bells jingled and the black hair swung from side to side. At last they came to the stone figures of Hanuman and Nandi under the wide spreading branches of a giant banyan tree and there they halted; the idol bearers in the centre and the musicians to one side, they stood for some moments in silent prayer as behind the crowd fanned out in a semi-circle. Again water was sprinkled and *dal* scattered and *chaurwar* and peacock-feathers were lowered as in salutation. By this time Madu seemed near collapse, and often hung with thrown-back head helplessly on the arm of the *katora*, who, remaining in complete control of his senses throughout these ceremonies, was careful to keep the sacred bells ringing.

Thus they circled the village, going from sacred place to sacred place. Whenever the *katora* paused the blare of trumpets died, the drummers' rhythm sank to a soft *vibrato* as they played on the membrane with their finger-tips, and the melodious strains of the *kingri* rose above the tinkling of the sacred bells. From the Hanuman, they crossed a small open space to the Nat Auwal, the Village-Mother, and here the godhead possessed another of the worshippers; he fell to his knees, rolling and crawling over the ground in the path of the god. Two friends drew him to his feet, and as the idols passed, he saluted them with folded hands and was himself again. From the Auwal the procession passed down a sloping field and skirting the village visited other cattle-sheds, whose owners waited with water and offerings of boiled rice, the stream where the cattle drink, the mahua tree sacred to Bhimana, the village well, and a tomb with a flag pole until at last the procession returned to the beginning of its pilgrimage; the three shrines of Bhimana, Rajul Pen and Daul Malkal. There the crowd split into two groups; some followed the *katora* carrying the Persa Pen to the leaf-shelters erected the previous day before the house of Kanaka Kodu, the Persa Pen's raja, but a few attached themselves to Kursenga Madu, who bore the idols of Mora Auwal to the courtyard of Kanaka Moti.

Outside Kodu's house his womenfolk awaited the coming of the Persa Pen, and when the *katora* rested the base of the bamboo on a big stone the *katora's* wife poured water over it, catching the drips in a silver vessel. Then she poured water over the feet



of the *katora*, and one by one the men in the procession came forward to have their feet washed. Meanwhile a *soira's* wife plastered a small patch in the centre of the sun-shelter with cow-dung, and there the *chauwur* was set up, its bamboo-shaft resting on a piece of *Terminalia tomentosa* bark; close to the idols the small ritual spear was driven into the ground and to either side the two heavy ceremonial spears; behind stood the young men with swords raised as though on guard. Out of the crowd now stepped Atram Lachu, the village headman, who had so far remained in the background; he brought a new white cloth and with the help of a clansman held it before the idol, screening it in much the same way as at weddings the bridal couple is screened during the ceremonial washing of feet. Now it was the turn of the women-folk to greet the Persa Pen; for days they had been busy pounding and grinding grain and pressing oil in readiness for the great ceremonies of which they had until now been only distant spectators. But now the courtyard and the veranda were crowded with women, grandmothers, mothers, newly married wives and quite small girls, all dressed in their best, brilliantly coloured *sari*, with sparkling silver ornaments and hair newly washed and oiled. First the *katora's* wife came to the idol; she poured water from a small brass vessel over the base of the idol's bamboo and the handles of the spears, saluted each with folded hands and bent head, then kneeling down before each in turn touched the ground with her forehead. Then came all those women married to Kanaka men, who had at some previous feast been presented to the Persa Pen, and after them small girls, the daughters of Kanaka men, and then married women, born of Kanaka parents; each in turn bowed down before the idol, sprinkled water with leaves dipped into a brass pot and touched the ground with the forehead.

When all the women had thus ceremonially greeted the Persa Pen, an unmarried girl, the daughter of a Kanaka man, brought five pots of water, newly drawn, and demanded payment from the *katora*; she was given a few coppers, the cloth was taken away and the *katora* and his assistants began to bathe the Persa Pen after the long and dusty pilgrimage round the village. They poured one by one the five pots of water over the whisk, and the women crowding round cupped their hands to catch the sacred liquid, sipping it and rubbing it on the faces of their small children or squeezing out their own dampened *sari* to preserve the drops in small vessels to be drunk later.

When the water had been shaken out of the whisk and the drenched red cloth wrung out, a large blanket was spread before the idol and the white cloth held as screen before the shaft. Then the women brought their offerings: brass dishes heaped with rice and millet, pulse or *chironji* kernels and a few coppers taken from the *sari* fold. Bowing down, each placed her gift on the blanket. Many mothers had brought their small children, and even two-

year old toddlers put down offerings and, guided by their elders, touched the ground with their foreheads. As each woman stepped back, she saluted with reverences the men carrying the baskets with the ritual objects and the two spear-bearers.

Simultaneously an almost identical ceremony was being enacted before Kanaka Badu's house, where the sacred objects of the Auwal had been set up; here the worshippers were women born of other clans and married to Kanaka men.

As soon as all the women had deposited their offerings before the Persa Pen, the grain was tied into the white cloth and the *katora* carried the idol into the house of the Kanaka raja. There a new pot, containing freshly made millet gruel, had been kept ready in the corner of the kitchen where all domestic acts of worship are performed. The *katora* dipped the ends of the whisk into the gruel and then holding it over the householder's *dhoti* allowed the liquid to drip into the fold. As Kodu received the porridge sanctified by the touch of the idol's hair, he bowed with folded hands and addressed the Persa Pen with the following prayer :

Great King, give me food,  
May my crops prosper,  
May good fortune be mine,  
May my grain be plentiful,  
May my house be prosperous,  
Give me good fortune.

One member from each household, either man or woman, in turn held up *dhoti* or *sari*, having in like manner some millet gruel dropped into the fold, and prayed to Persa Pen for success and wealth. Returning to their houses the recipients emptied their clothes of the gruel and smeared it in all their grain and store baskets, so that after the next harvest they should be filled to the rim.

While the Gonds crowded into the narrow kitchen round the *katora* and the idol, the Pardhan Chitru sat on the veranda playing his fiddle and singing in a soft voice :

All kinsmen gather,  
Like flowers in blossom, all kinsmen gather,  
Wives' clans, brothers' clans gather,  
Sisters and daughters gather.  
Youths build the leaf shrine,  
Girls plaster the platform,  
All adorn the leaf-shrine,  
Raitar, the god comes,  
Macha Devi, the *katora*'s wife is ready  
Four-stringed her pearl necklace,  
Three-stringed her breast chains,  
Engraved her ring, plain her ring,  
On her feet anklets, in her nose studs.

In her navel a diamond, on her forehead vermillion,  
 A row of pearls to mark her parting,  
 A light on a brass-plate, and a brass water-jug.  
 Your greeting give him,  
 His greeting take,  
 Brothers' wives, five of *katora* kin,  
 Brothers' wives, five of clansmen's kin,  
 Brothers' wives, five of Pardhan kin,  
 Their greeting take,  
 Your greeting give them.

When the song had ended and the *katora* appeared with the idol in the door, several women, married to men of six-brother clans, blocked the way with a cloth and demanded their traditional dues (*ulpa* or *bunda*) for all the services rendered and to be rendered to the Kanaka men throughout the feast. A song, sung in insistent high-pitched voices, emphasized their claims:

Give us our dues, oh Raitar,  
 Give us our dues, oh Raitar,  
 Your *katora's* wife climbed up the shelter,  
 Pay us her fee,  
 Your clanswomen climbed up the shelter  
 Pay us her fee.<sup>1</sup>

The women's plea was not ineffectual. The Kanaka men put four silver rupees into the cloth, which was immediately removed. Drums and trumpets sounded, and in the shade of the shelter the men began to dance with short lilting steps, the *katora* carrying the idol. But at this Kanaka Manku, a Pardhan well over seventy years old and renowned for his knowledge of ritual, intervened and insisted that during this dance the *katora* should hand over the idol to his *soira*, Atram Lachu the headman of Marlavai. So the old headman carried the idols and leading the dance tripped round the centre post of the shelter; close behind came some fifteen other men, and circling on the outskirts a few women danced with knees and backs bent in slow waltz-like steps.<sup>2</sup>

This dance lasted only for a few minutes, and then the procession, the headman still carrying the idol, set out for the mahua tree sacred to Bhimana just outside the village. But hardly had Atram Lachu left the shelter when the way was barred by

<sup>1</sup> The reference to the climbing of the sun-shelter by the *katora's* wife and another clanswoman is explained as follows: according to Gond custom a woman may not climb into the attic of her house or on to the shelter before it in the presence of her husband's elder brothers; the singers allege that the *katora's* wife and a clanswoman of the Kanaka men has violated this taboo by climbing on to the *mandop* in the presence of the Persa Pen, the 'eldest brother' of the Kanaka men, and suggest that the fine should be paid to them.

<sup>2</sup> Women dance in the same style at weddings, but never during the Dandari time.

three cloths stretched across the street by men of six-brother clans. These demanded the customary fee (*bunda*) for the help given to their *soira*, the Kanaka men, in the performance of the Persa Pen feast. Not until two rupees had been put into each cloth, did they allow the procession to pass on, down the path, out of the village and past the well to the sacred mahua tree. There the idols were set up and all the ritual objects belonging to the two deities were laid on the ground. Now came some hours of rest after the strenuous exertions of the day and men and boys stretched themselves out in the shade, smoking and gossiping; in the evening food was brought from the village ready cooked, and men and boys ate heartily under the tree.

Silence soon enveloped the village, and the rising moon found people sleeping on cots and mats in front of their houses, where the night breeze brought relief after the oppressive heat of the day.

It was still dark when trumpets and drums summoned the men to accompany the Persa Pen idols to the Pedda Vagu for the ceremonial bath. Except for the very old and infirm and the men whose wives' monthly impurity prevented them from participating, the entire male assembly joined the pilgrimage. Bullocks were yoked to carts and provisions packed up in baskets, and long before the grey of dawn threw the hills into relief the procession set out for the distant river. The *katora* and some other young men took turns in carrying the ritual objects, while alongside went the Pardhans playing their instruments till the village boundary was reached. Older men rode in carts and were now and then kept company by those tired from the previous day's exertions. Over shadowy hills, through upland valleys, they wound their way northwards. Whenever the procession approached a village, trumpets and drums heralded the Persa Pen's coming and the villagers ran out and saluted the idol.

Then at last they came to the edge of the plateau, where the land falls steeply away. By now it was sunrise. Below, outlined by the dark line of trees, lay the Pedda Vagu. They descended the steep slope and came to the banks of the river where great green pools of water lay beneath tall shady trees. Here they halted, and the *katora* sacrificed a black chicken to the water-spirits.

After the head of this chicken had been thrown into the water, the *katora* sacrificed another fowl for the Persa Pen. Then he waded into the river and dipped the sacred whisk several times into the water. All the other ritual objects were also bathed and then set up under a tree. Last the men bathed themselves and washed their clothes. When all these ablutions were completed, the assembly spread itself fanwise before the Persa Pen and saluted the godhead. The Pardhan played his *kingri*, singing:

In Chait month's heat  
 My body is burning,  
 In the deep water will I bathe,  
 Splashing the water, hitting the water.  
 Sixty brooks become one stream,  
 Sixty streams become one river,  
 Sixty rivers become one ocean,  
 In the ocean's water will I bathe.

In this song the Persa Pen speaks of the wish to cool burning limbs, splashing and playing in the water. But a single stream or a single river are not enough; only in the ocean, fed by sixty great rivers, will the god bathe.<sup>1</sup>

The next rite to be performed was the sacrifice of a goat at the Auwal shrine near the village of Sungapur; for these ceremonies were taking place within the domain of this important mother-deity, and she too had to be propitiated.

So a small band of men climbed the hill and with the usual observances sacrificed a goat. But they left only small ceremonial offerings of liver and head at the shrine and carried the rest of the meat back to the camp on the river bank. There a meal was prepared: curry of goat and chicken, and quantities of millet. All through the heat of the day, the company of *saga* and *soira* lay under the shady trees, feasting and sleeping, and set out on the return journey only when the sunlight mellowing to gold lost its fierceness.

In Marlavai the women had busied themselves with cleaning the newly built shrines for *sati* and Mora Auwal, plastering them with mud and cow-dung, but they did not approach the *pen-gara*, prepared the day before for the Persa Pen rites. Moreover there was more grain to husk and spices to grind for the feast of the coming night.

At nightfall the Persa Pen procession had not returned and when some three hours later trumpets sounded from the direction of Bhimana's mahua tree, most of those in the village were deep asleep. There was no ceremonial welcoming of the returning pilgrims, and after a short halt at the Bhimana tree the procession with idols and carts jolted across the dark fields towards the group of god-shrines. There it split into two groups, and while the Persa Pen idol was taken to the *pen-gara*, the ritual objects of the Auwal were arranged in their recently built square shrine. From now on more or less parallel ceremonies were performed at the *pen-gara* and the shrine of Mora Auwal, and the worshippers fluctuated from one to the other attending in turn the essential rites at each place. Nevertheless the worship of the Persa Pen was the central interest, and when the Pardhans and drummers

<sup>1</sup> It is worth noticing that the whole song is in the singular and the Persa Pen appears as one person, even though *chanwur* and *sale* are the symbols of a female and a male deity.

left the *pen-gara* to play at the Auwal shrine it was never for more than a few moments.

The first task after the arrival of the procession was the preparation of the 'altar' for the sacrificial rites and the installation of the idol. In between the two leaf-shelters and beside the flat stone representing the stone-slab with which Sri Shembu closed the entrance to the primaeval cave, the idol was set up on the same place as the day before. Once more the *chawwur* was washed with water newly drawn from the well, and the *katora* and the young men who had helped carry the idol had water poured over their feet. The *katora* then set up the idol close to the stone, arranging beside it the spears and the basket with the *sati* stones.

Fires were kindled and kept burning beside the shelter, the flickering of flames lit the scene, sometimes illuminating, and sometimes silhouetting the figure of the *katora* standing in front of the idols and waving smouldering incense thrice, and the men behind him gradually forming themselves into a semi-circle; the *katora* prostrated himself before the idol and the worshippers threw themselves to the ground. A few moments later first four and then two men, late-comers, stepped from the darkness into the circle of light and shade and greeted the Persa Pen in similar fashion.

The idol installed, there was a lull in the ceremonies; many men went to sleep on the ground, while others sat smoking and gossiping, some went to the village to fetch provisions and the sacrificial animals, and some young boys were sent off to fetch firewood and leaves for plates.

Before the main rites began the *katora* propitiated the god by the sacrifice of a chicken provided by himself. Two men held a white cloth to shield him from the eyes of spectators while he offered incense, placed small quantities of grain before the idols and put the chicken to peck. This chicken, known as *palsar pori*, was sacrificed in a peculiar way; the *katora* pressed it against a sword held edge upwards, cutting it in half, with a wing in either hand, and then crossing his hands he put down the right side left and the left side right. One of the halves was later eaten by him and the other by the Pardhan.

Presently, this sacrifice over, the *katora* took some cow-dung from a cloth brought newly from the village and freshly drawn water from a brass pot, and plastered the ground all round the idols. On this altar a new cloth was spread, and on this the *katora* poured his own offering, a few handfuls of millet-flour. Then followed all the other men, irrespective of clan and phratry, bringing offerings—some rice, some millet, some flour—and handed them to the *katora* and his brother.

When the offerings had all been heaped in three great mounds before the idol, a wide spreading crescent of *saga* and *soira* curved round the Persa Pen, facing east and the smaller shelter, where

the Pardhans and drummers sat. To the sound of trumpets and drums, the *katora* carried smouldering incense along the whole line of worshippers and lastly to the three Pardhans. As he passed, each man saluted the incense with folded hands. The *katora* and his brother squatted before the grain heaps, then took up handfuls of rice, and, following each other went from man to man dropping a few grains of rice into the cupped hands raised in waiting. All slightly bent their knees in salutation and then stood silent, the grain pressed between folded palms. Drums and trumpets stilled; and the *katora* from his place on the left wing of the semi-circle addressed the Persa Pen in a hardly audible voice:

See now, great lord, oh Raitar,  
 Give us food,  
 Oh look on us, Raitar,  
 From twelve dangers save us.  
 Slay our foes, blacken their faces.  
 Give us good fortune in plenty,  
 Sons and daughters, families, Raitar,  
 May they remain well, anointed with oil.  
 Anointed with milk may they be :  
 Give us wealth and riches.  
 Give us good fortune and much success,  
 Treat us with kindness.  
 In going ahead, in coming behind  
 Grant us your favour.  
 Sons and daughters they are yours,  
 Keep them all well.

Of a sudden drums and trumpets roared: all prostrated themselves, lying face downwards on the dry earth for a few minutes: then they rose. The rice grains were collected from each man by the *katora* and his brother, taken to the altar and mingled with the rest of the offerings: then once more grain was distributed and the whole worship with prayer and prostration was repeated in exactly the same form.<sup>1</sup>

The drums and the trumpets whose music had underlined most of the important phases in the rites were now silent and Kanaka Chitru, the principal Pardhan, began to sing, accompanying himself with the soft tunes of his fiddle and the low jingling of the bells from the crest of his curved bow. All stood in reverent silence as the sacred song rang through the night:

Flowers bursting into blossom,  
 All kinsmen gather together.  
 Maternal kinsmen come together,  
 Paternal kinsmen come together,

<sup>1</sup> The Gonds consider this repetition of the worship as an unalterable traditional practice: as my Gond informants explained, the act must be performed 'in a pair.'

Sisters, daughters, come together,  
Their greeting take,  
Your greeting give them ;  
Spurred cocks accept as food,  
Horned goats accept as food,  
A calf of two years accept as food.

The Pardhan's song lasted three or four minutes, and then the music of squeaking trumpets and thundering drums resumed. The interest of the assembled crowd turned now to the shrine of Mora Auwal, where chickens and goats destined for sacrifice were subjected to the usual tests preceding the slaughter. While the women may not participate in the central rites of the Persa Pen nor even approach the *pen-gara*, they take an active part in the worship of Mora Auwal and the *sati*, and their songs accompanied all the preparatory rites at the Auwal shrine. When the slaughter of the animals began they were almost the only spectators, for most men had streamed back to the *pen-gara*.

Then on the 'altar' in front of the Persa Pen idols, the *katora* traced a design of powdered turmeric, millet flour and vermilion, letting the powder run through his fingers as he drew the lines with swift sure sweeps: five squares of turmeric powder side by side, and before them two sets of small heaps of rice, five in a row and a sixth in front. All the men who had provided chickens for sacrifice now brought them to the *katora* to be anointed with oil and turmeric, and then set them, one by one, before the grain heaps. If a chicken pecks the grain it is a sign that its sacrifice will be accepted by the godhead, but its refusal to eat signifies the refusal of the deity to accept the offering. As each man put down his chicken to the test he murmured a prayer similar in content to the communal prayer spoken by the *katora*. Most fowls—and some were small chickens only a few days old—readily picked up the grain, but some hesitated and then a bamboo torch was held close by the head so that in its light the fowl might more readily eat, while the owner muttered prayers begging the deity to accept the offering. The greatest difficulty was created by the *patel* Atram Lachu's chicken; frightened by the noise it steadily refused to eat, and for nearly half an hour the proceedings were held up as the old man tried every means to coax the chicken into pecking, and recited long prayers to placate the offended deity. At last he had to send to the village for a larger chicken and this proved luckily less difficult and quickly began to eat.

Next three goats were brought and stood before the idols, men holding their hind-legs, and the *katora* first anointed their foreheads and then sprinkled them with water. Their behaviour too was closely watched, for the goats must shake their whole body before they are considered acceptable to the deity. One goat shook itself as soon as the cold water touched its head and back; but the others remained obdurate, staring and baaing piteous-



ly ; low-voiced prayers called on the godhead to accept the sacrifice but the men had to aid the deity in the expression of his pleasure by pouring water into the goats' ears, thereby bringing about the desired effect : both goats shook themselves violently.

When goats and chickens had thus been consecrated the slaughter of the sacrificial animals began. One of the Kanaka men held a sword, cutting edge upwards, close to the ground, and severed the chickens' heads by a quick upward stroke across the taut, stretched-out throat ; one after another the donors brought their fowls ; the fluttering bodies were thrown aside and the heads put down before the Persa Pen. After the chickens a goat was brought and stood in front of the god ; Kodapa Kasi lifted his sword and as the drums rolled beheaded the goat with a single flashing stroke. There was an excited cry from the spectators, and the *katora* quickly placed the head before the Persa Pen, while his brother caught some of the gushing blood in cupped hands and sprinkled it over the altar. The writhing carcass was dragged away while the second goat experienced the same fate. Some of the consecrated animals, some chickens and the third goat, however, were held over for a later rite at the *sati* shrine.

A lowing cow of reddish colour, kept all this time in readiness, was rounded up and brought to the *pen-gara*, its legs were roped together and the young men threw it to the ground, dragging it before the Persa Pen where helpless, it was pushed and pulled into such a position that it lay with the head upright as though in natural repose. The *katora* waved incense round its head and sprinkled it with water, turmeric and grain, but there was no test comparable to that of the goats. Trumpets and drums sounded : Kodapa Kasi raised his sword and it caught the red glow of the fire as he held it above his head, poised, judging his distance. The drumming rose to a tremendous crescendo and then the sword came down on the cow's neck. But the stroke was too weak or the edge too blunt and men with ready axes quickly hacked through the spine. No sooner had the head rolled off, than the *katora* placed it on the altar beside the heads of goats and chickens. When the sacrificial animals had been slaughtered, the Pardhan Chitru took a small chicken and sacrificed it in front of his fiddle which according to a myth is the transformed body of his ancestress Hirabai.

Dragged to one side, the bodies of the slain animals were now skinned and cut up and the meat handed over to men of six-brother clans, who, as *soira* of the Kanaka man, have the task of preparing the food for the feast. Of this food no woman may eat. The rites at the *pen-gara* over, all moved to the shrine already prepared to house the *sati*, the nine stones representing ancestors. These stones which, throughout the rites, had rested in a basket by the side of the Persa Pen, were now installed in a line on a raised platform occupying the centre of the shrine, and smeared with

fresh red paint. While the *katora* made the usual preparations for the sacrifice, the women came singing down the path from the village and soon surrounded the shrine; closely they pressed round it, singing a commentary on the ritual acts in progress and begging the deity to accept their offerings: lines like the following recurred twenty or more times:

Lachu, Somu's son,  
He is the priest,  
Smoke rises from the incense-vessel,  
He gives the offering,  
Holding a chicken, making flour-heaps,  
Spurred cocks,  
Horned goats,  
Accept as offerings.

At last the chickens and the goat which had already been consecrated before the Persa Pen were brought to the *sati* shrine and there beheaded in the same manner as those at the *pen-gara*. This ended the main sacrificial rites. It was long past midnight. The women's song faded, Pardhan Chitru tied up his *kingri* and the musicians, Gond and Pardhan alike, laid aside their instruments. All over the field fires sprang into flame, the centres of small groups, chatting and smoking, while they waited for the feast to be ready. Close to the *pen-gara* men prepared the food, but there was little art in their cooking: once the animals had been hacked up into small pieces without much distinction as to meat, intestines and bone, and put into huge brass cauldrons with oil, salt, chillies, spices and a great deal of water, there was little to do but to stir the ingredients with long-handled ladles and watch the steam rise in clouds from the wide necks. The meat of the animals killed before the *sati* shrine was, though also cooked by men, prepared separately near the *sati* shrine, and this food was eaten by the women, who may not partake of the animals killed at the *pen-gara*. The grain to be offered to the Persa Pen was also cooked separately in a special pot and so was a small amount of meat. When this sacrificial food (*niwot*) was ready, a cloth was stretched over poles in such a way as to screen off three sides of a small space before the altar. There the *katora* and the men of Kanaka clan, the members of the raja-house excepted, sat down to a ceremonial meal. Water was brought in a brass pot and all washed their hands, then incense was handed round, and in silence the *katora* offered some of the food, a little rice and liver, to the Persa Pen, placing it on five *mura*-leaves before the idols. Then he took a few morsels of the sacrificial food and threw them aside for the Departed, praying for their blessing:

See, Departed, may this reach you,  
Grant us your favour.

Behind the screen the Kanaka men sat down to eat of the sacrificial food, and when they had finished, small portions of

the same food were served first to the other people of the five-*wen*-phratry, and to the Pardhans, who ate separately near the small shelter; then to their *soira*, the six-brother people, after them to the seven-brother people and at last to the four-brother people. But this ceremonial meal was only an appetiser for the coming feast, when the diners devoured enormous quantities of meat and millet without any distinction of clan or phratry.

Dawn was creeping over the hills while leaf-platters were still heaped with fourth or fifth helpings. The Pardhans, faithful to their duty, once more blew their trumpets, signifying that the approaching day had found the feast in full swing. But before it was fully light most of the men had silently sneaked off to a comfortable bed in the village. Only a few dozing Kanaka men and the Pardhans guarded their Persa Pen, still standing erect on the scene of the previous night's rites.

So great was the general exhaustion that the sun had long passed the zenith before the men again assembled before the sacred objects. For the last time the *katora* burnt incense and carried the idol dancing round the circle of worshippers, and handed it in succession to several men who each carried it, dancing, for a few moments.

Now the end of the ceremonies was near and the *katora* began the last rites; young men picked up the sacred spears and baskets, and the idol passed back into the hands of the *katora*. The bearers of the sacred objects stood in a line headed by the *katora* with the Persa Pen, and one after the other the worshippers went up to the *katora*, greeted the god with folded hands, exchanged a formal embrace with the *katora* and then prostrated themselves at the *katora's* feet. Last came the Pardhans, who substituted a deep reverence for the embrace. Then the idol was once more set up on the altar, and the *katora* opened a leaf-bundle of the grain which the previous day had been offered to the Persa Pen and gave a small quantity to each householder. The recipients tied the grain into their cloths, holding it first in silent prayer before the Persa Pen. In the meanwhile a meal had been prepared with meat and millet, and when all had eaten the *katora* and his *soira* took the idol to pieces; the *chawwur*, the bells and the cloth were carefully folded up and laid in the large pot, while the *sale*, the iron spear-point, was secured in a wooden sheath. To the sound of rolling drums the pot with the ritual objects was carried into the newly built *sati* shrine and placed in the fork of the three-pronged post. Then the *katora* and a group of other Kanaka men carried the *sale* in solemn procession to a nearby mahua tree and after making many reverences, placed it in the fork of a branch. In doing this they sang in union:

At the god's shrine, at the feast-place, Raitar,  
Clansmen and brothers gather,  
Wives' kinsmen gather,  
All kinsmen gather, Raitar,

Your greeting give them, Raitar,  
Their greeting take, Raitar,  
A golden nest is your house, Raitar.  
Going ahead, coming behind,  
May all our works succeed, Raitar.  
Sons, daughters may remain well, Raitar,  
All kinsmen, all relations,  
Clansmen and brothers in twelve moons' times,  
Your feast we will celebrate, Raitar.

The 'golden nest' (*soneta gumpā*) of the song refers to the hollow log laid crutch-like across the branches of the mahua tree in which the *sale* is deposited. But here the disposal of the *sale* within sight of the *pen-gara* was purely ceremonial, and no provision for the 'golden nest' was made. The Marlavai men said that later the *katora* accompanied only by one trusted man would hide the *sale* elsewhere so that it could not be stolen by clansmen from other villages.

The sun stood low when the ceremonies had come to an end, but men and women assembled once more at the feast-place and the *sati* shrine, where they cooked and ate the meat and millet remaining from the previous night. In the dark they filed back to the village.

Custom prescribed—ignoring human frailty—that the night after the Persa Pen feast should be spent in listening to sacred songs, and the Pardhans, as the guardians of tradition, followed the old established procedure. They installed themselves under the leaf-shelter in front of the Kanaka raja's house, the old man sitting in the centre of a mat, singing and playing his fiddle, and his son and nephew squatted on either side, joining in the refrain that followed each verse. Round about lolled the young men, rolled in their cloths, or resting on one arm, smoking leaf-pipes and listening to the old, old epic of the birth of the Gond gods and their imprisonment in the primaeval cave by Sri Shembu.

The Pardhans' singing was suddenly interrupted by the announcement that the meal was ready. Leaf-platters were distributed and groups formed in the moon-lit squares and the deep shadows of the house-eaves.

After the meal there was an abortive attempt of Pardhans and drummers to induce the men to dance. Trumpets spluttered and drums, beaten by tired hands, marked a lame rhythm. It was not inspiring, and the young men were in agreement in preferring their beds to the dance floor.

Next morning all but the women, who had to fetch water from the well and prepare food, slept well into the day, but at noon, after a meal of millet and *dal*, the Pardhans resumed their singing in front of Kodu's house and the opening stanzas of old Chitru's song quickly drew a large audience. The shelter before Kanaka Kodu's house no longer threw deep shade, for the fierce sun had

shrivelled the leaves, and the sunlight, streaming through, chequered the ground with light. Young men and boys squatted in small groups in the open, but older men sat on mats or cots in the cool of verandas or in the shadow of overhanging eaves while here and there small groups of women lent against house walls. All listened eagerly to the stories of their mythical ancestors.

With short interruptions the Pardhans continued their singing throughout the heat of the afternoon, till about an hour before sunset. When they had sung of the Gonds' arrival in Dhanegaon and the institution of the Persa Pen cult by Pahandi Kupar Lingal, they began the myth of Manko, but did not get further than her marriage to Dundria Raur. At the next feast, in the month of Pus, they explained, they would start at once with the Manko myth, and sing it to the end.

In the evening another feast awaited the people of Marlavai and their guests. It was the turn of the six-brother people to provide a meal with the money received from the Kanaka men, and another goat was slaughtered, this time without any ceremony. Most people slept while some young men busied themselves over the cooking pots around huge cooking pots, stirring the boiling millet with long-handled ladles.

When the food was ready, the hosts went from house to house waking the sleepy inmates, but some time elapsed before groups of diners formed in the moonlit squares and leaf-platters were once more heaped with millet and goat curry.

After the meal the Pardhans and drummers began once more playing beside the *mandop* and the younger men danced under the shelter, moving with small tripping steps anti-clockwise round the centre posts all in a band, but without touching one another. Some had tied bell-anklets to their feet and as they warmed to the rhythm, and individual dancers whirled on their own axis they uttered hoarse shouts. After some time women too joined the dance, circling and revolving, with bent backs and knees, round the band of the male dancers. But the dance did not last much past midnight; all were tired and even the young men fell asleep; only a short flourish of drums at dawn maintained the fiction that 'the whole night had been spent in playing and dancing.' Everyone slept till far into the morning.

The Persa Pen feast had come to an end, and all that remained to be done next day was to pay the three Pardhans for their services; Rs. 4 and a few *seer* of millet, was the reward they received from the Kanaka men after some short and friendly bargaining. Chitru, though not ill satisfied with the sum, explained that it was modest compared with the gifts of cattle and cloth which of old Pardhans received on such occasions from their more prosperous Gond patrons.

VI. OTHER RITES AND CEREMONIES CONNECTED WITH  
THE CLAN DEITIES

The great festival in the month of Bhawe is for all clans the most important of the rites in honour of the Persa Pen, and for some clans it is the only time in the year when it is customary to take the sacred objects from their receptacles to be exposed to the eyes of the worshippers. Many clans, however, perform ceremonies similar in character, though generally on a somewhat smaller scale at Dassera and at the full moon of Pus. From Bhawe, in the middle of the hot weather, and throughout the rains, the idols of the Persa Pen remain in the shrine and on the mahua tree, and the only attention paid to them is the lighting of small lamps for five successive nights at every new moon, or for three nights on the occasion of other village feasts. It is not until the cold weather, when the Gonds celebrate in their own way—and usually at their own time—the Hindu festival of Dassera, that the Persa Pen is again propitiated with offerings.

The ceremonies on this occasion are an abridged edition of those performed in Bhawe, and it is usually only the clan-members living close to the seat of the Persa Pen and their *soira* who take part in the rites. As in Bawe *sale* and *chauvur* are washed and set up at the *pen-gara* but there is no procession and no pilgrimage to the village. The sacrifice of chickens and a goat takes place at night in much the same way as during the great clan-feast. A special feature is a large marrow set up on four bamboo spikes to resemble legs, and this figure is placed before the altar and cut in two by a single stroke from the sword of the *katora*, before the slaughter of any animals. It is said to represent a goat and is cooked together with the sacrificial food, but since real goats are also sacrificed at this ceremony, this explanation lacks credibility. Similar marrows are 'slaughtered' at the Dassera celebrations in the houses of rajas and prominent village-headmen, and I consider it not improbable that the marrow is intended to represent not a goat but a human victim. Nowadays the Dassera ceremony is always preceded by the First Rice Eating, when food-offerings are placed inside the Persa Pen shrine, and there is much to suggest that originally the worship of the clan-deities was connected with this first-fruit rite and became later amalgamated with the Dassera celebrations.

The third and last occasion when the Persa Pen is annually worshipped with the sacrifice of animals is the full moon of Pus, which falls in December or early January, just before the harvest of the winter crops begins.

During this feast the deceased clan-members are formally joined with the clan-deities by the sacrifice of a goat, and the third evening of the Persa Pen feast in Pus is entirely devoted to the propitiation of the Clan Ancestors and the Departed. Thus the

cult centring in the clan-deities strengthens not only the ties between the living, but also gives expression and reality to the idea of unity between the deified clan-ancestors, the recently departed, and the still living members of the clan. Associated with the Persa Pen of all clans, though not with all minor Jawa Pen and Sawere Pen, are *sati*, small stones or lumps of hardened vermilion paste which represent the female ancestors of the clan. With rare exceptions these *sati* are kept in the shrines which house the *chauwur* and brass bells, and their number often corresponds to that of the *wen* of the clan. This, however, is no definite rule, and in songs and prayers the *sati* are traditionally referred to as 'sixteen *sati*.' Most *sati* are small stones, covered with layer upon layer of vermilion paste, but others, it is said, contain no stones but are lumps of vermilion paste with a rice grain as kernel. The Gonds' ideas about their origin are far from clear or concise; usually it is said that from the beginning of time the *sati* existed together with the idols of the Persa Pen, that they represent ancestors whose souls (*sanal*) became gods and are therefore worshipped, but that no one knows exactly how they came into being. There is a vague belief that *sati* stones grew of themselves out of the ground when the spirit of a woman of particular merit obtained divine status, but I have never seen any individual *sati*-stone which was thought to represent any woman remembered by the present generation. During the Persa Pen rites the *sati* are placed in a basket and carried in the procession, and when a *katora* moves to another village he often takes the *sati* to his new place of residence.

To the *sati*, the symbols of female ancestors, correspond the *kamk*, the symbols of prominent male members of the clan. With one single though important exception, the *kamk* are stones, between six inches and two feet high, and they stand usually inside the Persa Pen shrine in line with the *sati*. The songs of Pardhans speak of "eighteen *kamk*," and in one place, the shrine of the Pandera Persa Pen at Rompalli, eighteen *kamk* are actually to be found beside six *sati*. It is, however, only at the original clan-centres, in the old clan *watan*, as the Gonds say, that *kamk* exist; for they may not be moved, and in these days of the dispersal of clans, when few Persa Pen are still at their old seats, *kamk* stones are far rarer than *sati*.

The cult of the deities and ancestors of the clan is not restricted to the great annual feasts, but forms an essential part of the Gonds' entire religious life. There are few rites and ceremonies at which the clan-deities do not receive a share in the offerings, or their name is not invoked side by side with that of the particular deity receiving worship. The favour and protection of the Persa Pen and of the ancestors is believed to be indispensable for the success of any enterprise, be it the raising of crops or the joining of a man and a maid in marriage, and the greatest of all oaths a Gond can swear is by the name of his Persa Pen.

Each Gond house contains in its kitchen a corner, known as *pen-komta*, where the floor is raised to a low platform and a small oil-lamp is kept. This corner is daily plastered with cow-dung, and before serving newly cooked food the women of the house scatter a few morsels of the fare in this corner and salute the clan-god with a reverence. The Persa Pen thus worshipped in the houses is sometimes also referred to as Rota Pen, 'house-god,' and whether you ask a Gond for the name of his Persa Pen or his Rota Pen, you will get the same reply. If a house is defiled by a person entering with shoes or in a state of ceremonial impurity, the Persa Pen of the householder must be placated by the sacrifice of a chicken, and similarly any serious offence committed within the precincts of a village containing the shrine of a Persa Pen must be expiated by a suitable offering in order to avert the wrath of the clan-god.

Apart from the daily food-offerings in the houses of the clan-members and an occasional propitiatory offering when a disturbance of the harmony of house or village is feared to have roused his wrath, the Persa Pen receives also attention and worship at certain important junctures in the life of the individual. After the birth of a child, the father sacrifices at the next clan-feast a chicken to the Persa Pen, or, if he does not attend the feast himself, he gives a contribution to the *katora* with the commission to sacrifice a chicken in the child's name. At every wedding a goat is sacrificed and the roasted liver offered by the bridal couple to the bridegroom's Persa Pen, and a person's death is followed by various offerings for the clan-god and the *sati* including the sacrifice of a goat to mingle the spirit with the clan-deities and ancestors.

Finally there are a number of annual rites, mainly connected with agriculture, when the Persa Pen and the *sati* are propitiated with offerings. The most important of these is the *Nowan*, the ceremonial eating of the first fruits of millet, maize and vegetables. Those men whose Persa Pen is in the village offer the first fruits at the shrine containing *chauwur* and *sati*, while the members of all other clans make separate small altars for the Persa Pen and *sati* in one of their fields by plastering a piece of ground with cow-dung, and thereon placing their offerings of grain and vegetables. Afterwards the members of each phratry or sub-phratry eat the first grain of the new harvest together in the house of any man who may choose to invite the other members of his phratry to the ceremonial meal.

Similar offerings to the Persa Pen and the *sati* are given at the time of the first rice eating, which precedes the Dassera celebrations, and at that time too the members of each phratry take the ritual meal in common.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Although the Gonds revere many gods and are always prepared to include a new deity in their pantheon, no other cult plays



as vital a part in tribal life as the worship of the clan-deities. Their cult is intimately linked with the myths of the culture-hero Pahandi Kupaṛ Lingal and the deified clan-ancestors, and there exists a close relationship of mutual enlivenment between myths and ritual, as the myths lend sanction and power to ritual acts, so does the symbolic enactment of mythical occurrences during the clan-feasts endow the myths with reality. In the Persa Pen feasts the Gond feels himself one with untold generations of forefathers and with his divine ancestors, and it is in the sacramental rites based on the clan-myth that the unity of his clan attains its highest realization.

No other cult-act is performed with the same devotion and earnestness as the sacrificial rites at the *pen-gara*, no other deity is regarded with such awe as the Persa Pen. Compared to the tense atmosphere of reverence at a clan-god feast, the spirit during the annual rites in honour of Sri Shembu is one of boisterous gaiety, and even the dangerous mother-goddesses are not approached with the same humbleness and caution as the gods of *sale* and *chauwur*. Though most Gonds will tell you that the greatest of all gods is Sri Shembu Mahadeo, his worship seems to touch only the fringe of Gond life, and many references to Sri Shembu and his wife Parvati in myths and epics are characterized by a remarkable levity and irreverence. The cult of the Persa Pen, on the other hand, is deeply rooted in the tribal consciousness and it is in this cult that the Gond's strongest religious impulses find expression and satisfaction.

# WITCHCRAFT IN THE DANGS

BY T. B. CREAGH COEN

THE Dangs recognize the distinction between physical illness and spells, but are inclined over-readily to attribute all aches and pains to the latter. A doctor told me that he had himself treated a Bhagat (medicine-man) for pneumonia and cured him, and then argued the matter out with him. The Bhagat, however, was in no way shaken in his faith in his own craft; he said, 'O, but you see this particular trouble turned out to be a physical illness, so of course you were able to cure it.'

When some one falls seriously ill and a spell is suspected (as it usually is), the procedure is to get a Bhagat to hold what is known as a *bhagtai* or investigation. This consists in his accepting some offerings—grain, a goat and drink are usual—and then going into trance. In trance, the Bhagat reveals the name of the witch, or a description of her house. It is admitted that often Bhagats are bribed or deceived into mentioning innocent persons. Leaving aside fraud, however, Bhagats are believed frequently to reveal the correct name of the person responsible for the spell. This is usually a witch (*dakin*) but occasionally a male wizard (*bhutala*). The Dangs Dewan who has seven years' experience of this tract is fully convinced of the possibility of successful *bhagtai* and says that the many witches he has seen show common signs. He rolled off a list of them; witches are usually emaciated and black, look prematurely old, have limbs not well-developed, wear useless ornaments and white stone bead-necklaces. He says that these are the well-known signs of a witch, and adds, purely as a theory of his own, but one of which he is fairly well satisfied, that they do not practise witchcraft until after the birth of their first child. Witches are both married women and widows. The art is a very closely-guarded secret; if a man wants to learn witchcraft, he usually marries a witch.

To return to the procedure in a *bhagtai*, after the name of the witch has been revealed the next step is to compel her to remove the spell. This is done in a highly direct and practical manner by tying her upside down from a tree and beating her within an inch of her life, until she confesses that she is a witch and promises to remove the spell by counter-magic. It is well-known that this is not permitted in the Dangs. There is a Standing Order on witchcraft forbidding it; and enquiries which I made suggest that in fact grave cruelty of this kind does not nowadays occur here, the Dangs being an obedient folk. It does however occur in Khandesh, and Mr Masood tells me that witches are often cruelly beaten there; and I am inclined to suspect that minor bullying goes on, even in the Dangs. The fact that we do not allow what is considered the proper treatment is however well known, and a grievance. Several Chiefs whom I asked about the witchcraft situation, much as one asks about the crops else-

where, said it was shocking ; we really should appoint a Government Bhagat with authority to handle it. One Chief whom I asked, 'What would you do if allowed a free hand ?' said, ' I will kill two women in each of my villages for you if I may '. Another said he wished to beat five or six *dakins* severely ; he would find them all right if permitted.

I learned however from the Dewan afterwards, though no chief mentioned this—and I suspect that the system which I am about to explain does not work quite so efficiently and universally as the Dewan suggested—that a remarkable variant to beating has been devised, somewhat as we have in Dera Ghazi Khan, unlike Baluchistan, largely taught the Biloches to report adulterers to the Girga for fine compensation and imprisonment instead of killing them. This variant consists in reporting the witch to the Dewan. The complainant first gets the Dewan's permission to hold a *bhagtai*, which he gives on condition that there is no beating. The *bhagtai* is then carried out up to the revelation of the witch's name. The complainant then comes and tells it to the Dewan ; the mere fact that it is ' out ' is often enough to stop the mischief. If the patient does not at once recover, the Dewan sends for the witch and severely warns her to remove her spell. This always works, he says ; but I am sure the people feel that it is a pale second best to a good lambasting.

One of the doctors tells me that, very occasionally, witches are reported to him instead of to the Dewan ; he has had two such cases in two-and-a-half years. The Dewan gets about two cases a month. I understand that complaints to the Dewan are usually sent in, not direct, but through the local Forest Ranger.

Clearly we have here a problem not only in administration but in psychology. It is not merely a question of saving a few old women from being ill-treated, but of gradually teaching the Dangis to adopt scientific medicine. So long as they attribute nearly all illness to magic, they will not use our doctors ; and I am convinced that it is worse than useless simply to drum it into them that there is no such thing as witchcraft, even if it were true (which is highly doubtful) that these magical performances have never any basis in fact. They will not believe us, but they will receive a further blow to their self-respect and pride in their own customs, which will merely be driven underground. An essential element in our approach to the problem must be acceptance of the Dangis' point of view towards magic ; and our aim should be to devise some substitute for witch-torture which would satisfy their beliefs and wishes. It has been suggested that, on the analogy of the scapegoat, we might induce them to beat an image of the witch instead of the woman ; again, that we might get subsidized Government Bhagats to say that in fact there was no witchcraft involved, when called in. Advice is required from anthropologists with experience of similar problems elsewhere.

# TWO FOLK-TALES ABOUT WITCHES

BY VERRIER ELWIN

## I

### *An Agaria Story from Umaria in Mandla District*

Two or four men were sitting round the fire and talking. One of them said, 'Every night a witch drinks my blood.' They nodded in agreement, but one of them said, 'How is she able to get your blood? If a witch came to me I'd soon know about it and would kill her.' A woman was grinding nearby and heard what they were saying. Then the man who had spoken went home and for all his brave talk shut his door for fear the witch might come and sit on his bed. So eight days passed.

Then everybody in his house went to work in the fields, but he lay in bed with fever. His door was shut for fear of the witch, but she made a little hole in the wall, and turned herself into a leaf and went in. The man awoke and saw the leaf on the floor and knew what it was. He took a stick from the fire and burnt holes all over the leaf and threw it out of the house. When the witch took her proper shape again there were swellings and sores all over her body where the stick had burnt the leaf.

When her husband came home from working in the fields he found her lying very ill in the house. 'What is the matter?' he asked. 'I have got syphilis,' she said, 'it has spread all over my body.' The husband went to the magician. He was the father of the man who had burnt the leaf. But the man asked his father, 'What do they want? Don't go and help them but call everybody together.' When the villagers had assembled, the magician said, 'Bring the sick woman on her bed.' When they had brought her, the man told the story and the woman died within eight days.

## II

### *A Baiga Story from Pandpur in Mandla District*

A BAIGA had many cows which gave him a lot of milk. There was a witch who used to go daily to beg for buttermilk. One day the Baiga's only son abused the woman, saying, 'Why do you always come here to beg?' She was angry and when the boy took his supper poisoned his food by her magic. The boy began to vomit; all night he lay in pain and died at cock-crow. After they had buried him, the father went with some of his friends to hide near the grave to see if the witch would try to do some mischief.

At midnight the witch came naked, her hair falling about her shoulders, carrying a light in a broken pot. She sat down by the grave and made a knife from a bit of bamboo. She went seven times round the grave carrying the broken pot, then put it down and made an image out of her excreta. She put a *tika* of menstrual blood on the forehead of the image and began to throw her head to and fro in ecstasy. Then she stamped on the foot

of the grave and the boy's body came up out of the ground. She washed the body and restored it to life. First she talked sweetly to him and then abused him. 'You impotent fellow, you wanted to stop my buttermilk, but only your father is left now, and I am going to cut you into pieces.'

When they heard that, the men came out of their hiding-place and tried to catch her, but she slipped through their hands. At last one caught her by the hair and another got his fingers through the holes in her ears. The boy fell back dead into the grave. The men said, 'Make this boy alive or we will kill you.' She said, 'I don't know how to make him alive.' So they burnt her private parts with the fire and at last she restored the boy to life. Then they put her into the boy's grave and buried her.

# EARLY RECORDS CONCERNING THE SANTALS

BY W. J. CULSHAW

MISSION reports are a potential source of much early information about tribal peoples in India. The following extracts have been taken from early reports of the Freewill Baptist Foreign Missionary Society, which are in the possession of the Rev. A. A. Berg of Jhargram. The Rev. Jeremiah Phillips was probably the first non-Indian to learn Santali and he produced the first literature. Mr Berg has in his possession some of the original MSS of translations by Jeremiah Phillips. Several portions of the Scriptures are intact, and some are dated by himself as early as 1852 and 1854. He used the Bengali script. Much of the information in such a work as Hunter's *Annals of Rural Bengal* was supplied by him. These extracts give interesting data for comparison with other early reports, apart from the intrinsic interest of some of the information. As one would expect, observation of material objects results in more accurate information than in matters of custom and religious belief.

*Extract 1.* From the Sixth Annual Report: *The Journal of Brother Noyes* (29 December 1838). 'Came to a small village in the heart of a dense jungle. As soon as I came in sight of the houses, I felt persuaded I was coming among old acquaintances, they so much resembled the stick huts of the Coles of Sumbhulpore. When I saw the jet-black people, with a necklace of white beads about their necks, and their peculiar dress, if dress it might be called, I was more confirmed in my opinion. I immediately alighted from my horse and inquired if that was a village of the Coles, but was not a little surprised at being so soon transported from the Oriyas to a people who could not understand a word I said. I looked about with astonishment at the romantic change, till at length I found an old man who could speak broken Oriya of whom I gained the following information. He said they were not Coles but Santals. They have no castes among them. No temples, priests or images. Their principal object of worship is the sun, which they believe to be God Himself, and which they worship by sacrificing goats and chickens, at the same time repeating the prayer that the Coles repeat who sacrifice the same animals. The master of a family officiates as its priest, and performs the worship either in a dwelling house or under a tree. They also adore the departed spirits of their fathers. They consider themselves the aborigines of the country and esteem the Hindoos as their conquerors. They do not marry till the age of 16 or 17, which they do as follows: the man first marries himself to the woman by putting some paint on her forehead, after which the woman confesses herself his wife by anointing his head with oil. Thus the bride and bridegroom are the only ones concerned in the business. Unlike the Hindoos they do not burn but bury their dead. They live by husbandry and by distilling spirits from

rice of which they are very fond, as appeared from the headman of the village lying in a state of intoxication all the time I remained there. Except as it regards the object of their worship and their language, they resemble the Coles in every particular. I have learnt that there are more than 200 of these villages scattered throughout the Mour Bunge country, and though from time immemorial they have lived among the Oriyas, yet they maintain their peculiar manners, religion and language.'

*Extract 2.* From the Eighth Annual Report (the writer of the following extract is not named).

'9 February 1841. Started for a visit among the Santals. Crossed the river at Patna and rode four miles to Lanporra, a Santal village of about 20 houses, situated in the midst of a thick jungle several miles in extent. Made some inquiries concerning their religion, customs, &c. They informed us that they have but one object of worship, that is the sarl tree. They have several castes, and eat meat of all kinds.

'Rode on two miles through the jungle to Kindoocoonta, a large village of 40 houses. Their houses are built of round posts driven into the ground so near as to be nearly tight, sometimes plastered with mud, but generally not, this roofed with the common thatch or straw. Their wealth consisted of buffaloes, cattle, sheep, goats, hogs and fowl. They must subsist principally by their flocks and herds, as we saw nothing of cultivated lands. The country here is elevated and dry, being of the primary formation, consisting of continued ledges of reddish rock, the surface of which seems crumbling to dust. The people appear to be very fond of music. In the evening their musicians assembled with drum and fife, while the children were engaged in singing and dancing. As we arrived in the heat of the day we took shelter from the sun under a neighbouring banian. At night we asked for a house, but could obtain none, so the tree sheltered us for the night—so spreading our umbrellas over our heads to keep off the dew, we lay down to sound and quiet slumber.

'10 February. Spent the morning in making up a vocabulary of Santal words. Obtained about 150 words p. m. Hearing there would be a large dance some three or four miles off, and as most of our villagers had gone, we determined to go also. On our way we overtook a company of men, women and children, dressed in their nicest clothes, singing and skipping about in the most delightful manner. On arriving at the spot we found some 600 people assembled in a circular enclosure, in the centre of which a few leaves of the sarl tree were placed upon some rough images of elephants, horses, crocodiles, &c. Around these were some two hundred women, while in the outer part of the circle a large company of musicians followed by the men, were marching round at a varied pace, the weaker sex in the centre more leisurely. The scene was pleasant to witness; it is so seldom that we see anything

like activity, that we delight to gaze even upon a dance. The highest bliss to which an Oriya aspires, is to stuff himself until he can eat no more, and then lie down to sleep in the sun. This constitutes his happiness here, and in his opinion will constitute his heaven hereafter. But here appears to be a very different people. Wherever we have been, we have found the women mingling with the men, in their labours and in their recreations ; and they do not appear to be considered inferior. The consequence is they look like human beings—they respect themselves.'

*Extract 3.* From the Thirteenth Annual Report: this report contains an account of the linguistic labours of Mr Phillips.

'Your missionary published specimens of this language in the *Calcutta Christian Observer*, which a Swiss missionary, residing several hundred miles distant, has since informed him, corresponds exactly with the language of a numerous hill tribe, called Santals, residing in his vicinity. He also sent specimens of their language to Brother P. which agreed with the Santal spoken in the vicinity of Jellasure.'

It was reported that he had published a tract of eight pages, but on 30 May 1846 he himself wrote, 'I have prepared a new Santal primer, which I hope to get printed soon. It contains 12 pp. One half of the work consists of simple sentences, and the remainder of moral instructions, the Ten Commandments, the Lord's Prayer, &c. This little work was prepared, in part, because the first was published when his knowledge of the language did not enable him to make it useful.'



# THE HILL-TRIBES OF TRAVANCORE

BY L. A. KRISHNA IYER

THE hill-tribes form the aboriginal element in the population of Travancore. The main habitat of the tribes is forested and out of the way Highland districts; their remoteness and location are conducive to the retention of immemorial habits. The Highlands form the home of the Muthuvans, the Mannans, the Uralis, the Paliyans, the Malapantarams, and the Malpulayas, and the Midlands, of the Kanikkar, the Malayarayans and the Ullatans. It is an instructive experience to go from a jungle community like the Muthuvan, the Mannan, and the Urali to a village of the same people near easily accessible areas. In the former, tribal life and organization still retain their old vitality. One can almost feel the stir and throb of communal energy. Tribal life is an integrated whole. The people are vigorous, independent and happy. It is different in the case of a semi-civilized tribal village. There they are servile, obsequious, timid, and of poor physique. Their tribal life is all in pieces. The old myths and dances are forgotten and abandoned. The opening of a large number of estates in forest regions has brought them in contact with the people of the plains. In this way as well as by the penetration of civilized man in the forests, they are being brought under civilizing influences. I shall now give a brief account of their life and habits.

Of all the tribes, the Malapantarams of Central Travancore are in the hunting stage of civilization. Owing to luxuriance of vegetation, they are still within the tyranny of the jungle. Their simple and monotonous savage economy permits of no concentration of population. The smaller the number, the easier is the food secured. A very effective bar to progress is caused by their migratory habits. They average about one per square mile and live on the pith of sago palm and tubers. They do not allow another of their tribe to encroach on their domain. If anyone dares to do so, it shall be at the risk of his life. The Muthuvans, the Mannans, the Uralis, the Paliyans, and Kanikkar are nomadic agriculturists. They have a clear conception of tribal lands. Agriculture is adopted as an adjunct to the chase. They are fond of intoxicating drinks. Arrack is an article for all forms of aboriginal worship and social ceremonies.

The production of food is connected with the production of fire for which the tribes exercise their ingenuity in different ways. Tradition has it that it was sage Narada who taught them how to make fire by means of hand-drill. They also make fire by means of the flint and steel method which is characteristic of most of the tribes of South India. Safety-matches are now taking their place.

Primitive man was in a state of nudity, but in the course of evolution he became subject to a sense of shame which was not

his. This sense of shame is a by-product of modern civilization and became more or less a manifestation of the male. The first and most primitive form of clothing was to cover exposure. As typical of the fig-leaf state of society, there are several tribes in Travancore which have recently passed beyond that stage. The barks of trees formed the clothing of the Malapantarams. The Malavetans wore dresses of leaves and are even now called Tolvetans by the Kanikkar, which is reminiscent of the leafy garment that they wore in former times. The Kanikkar of Kallar almost go naked having only a few inches of cloth round their loins and a small cloth round their head. Closely connected with clothing are the mutilations and deformations. Among the Malavetans is found the interesting custom of chipping the incisor teeth in the form of serrated cones. This custom is found among the Kadars of the Cochin State and the Malays.

Natural shelters, caverns, and overhanging rocks may have been the abode of primitive man. The Malapantarams make the simplest of dwellings. They live under rock-shelters or break-winds made of junglewood posts and plantain leaves which are circular and conical and can hardly accommodate a husband, wife, and child. Boys and girls are housed in separate sheds close to the parental shed for the night. The Kanikkar have their huts wide apart. Tree-houses are found where elephants roam about. One feature of the domestic architecture of primitive culture is the institution of the bachelor-hall, where the young men of the community sleep and live. It is an important means of preserving social life. Unmarried girls remain for the night in a shed reserved for them. This practice is found among the Muthuvans and the Mannans.

The prime necessity of primitive man was food. He was more a gatherer than a hunter. This necessitated the use of some weapons. The digging stick is the beginning of agricultural implements, the progenitor of the hoe, the spade, and the plough. It is still used by Malapantaram, the Vishavan, and the Malavetan to collect wild roots and tubers. The bow is still used by the Kanikkar, the Muthuvan, and the Urali.

Frazer calls South India the classic home of exogamy to which the primitive tribes attach great importance. Their civilization is built on the clan. The family was continued through the mother. All rank and property descended through her.

Travancore is one of the ideal places for the study of primitive marriage institutions. The aboriginal races of South India differ from those of North India in that they marry earlier. Consequently, pre-nuptial intercourse is not so apparent as in the northern aboriginal races who marry in adult age. The Muthuvans, the Mannans, and the Kanikkar take special precautions to prevent such intercourse. The earliest form of marriage is marriage by capture. A relic of it is found among the Mannans and the

Muthuvans. Marriage by service is found among the Mannans and the Paliyans. Marriage by exchange of sisters is found among the Urali. A Urali marries as many women as he has sisters. The result is unequal distribution of women as wives between the males of the community, the old men having more than the young, who had to go without any. It is now practised to a limited extent. The tribes are mostly monogamous, and the family is regarded as the corner-stone of society. Polyandry prevails to a certain extent among the Malayarayans, the Uralis, and the Southern Pulayas. Contact with higher culture has proved pernicious to the simple morality of the primitive tribes.

The sway of customs is more powerful among people in the earlier stages of civilization. They are riddled by numerous prohibitions in their daily life. The Malapantarams take a bath in a stream, if polluted, and then alone enter the jungle. If they fail to do so, they incur the wrath of the gods, who are said to punish them with sickness. The idea seems to be that a man who has been on a journey may have contracted some magic evil from the strangers with whom he may have associated. Hence, on returning home, he has to undergo certain purificatory ceremonies, before he is admitted to the society of his tribe and friends. The tribes generally lead a pure life during the period of agricultural operations from December to April. Since they live in the domain of Sasta and other sylvan deities, they abstain from all contacts with the female sex. It is said that an Ullatan who had contacts with his wife, and went to hoe up the soil lost his eyes. It is also said that the shadow of such a man falling on a crop in the field will not only blight the crop, but also be detrimental to life. Man's superstitious fears are found to be in the exact ratio of his ignorance. His whole world swarms with evil beings. Unless propitiated, they endanger the produce of his labours in the field. Danger is supposed to inhere in the strange and the unknown. Every thicket, every watering place, and all rocky places abound with evil spirits. Man needs to walk warily in these circumstances, and he seeks to protect himself by the observance of prohibitions and by making offerings to the spirits.

All the tribes bury their dead. Burial has for its object the prevention of the ghosts from tormenting the living. The devices intended to prevent the return are manifold. A stone is planted at the head and foot of the grave among most of them. Sometimes a grave is enclosed with a fence too high for the ghost to cross particularly without a run. Such an enclosure is said to be the origin of stone circles strewn in the High Ranges of Travancore. Among the Kanikkar, a thorn of Smilax is pinned over the grave, one at each end and one in the middle. This is intended to cow down the spirit of the dead. They are buried with all their paraphernalia which belonged to them in life. Everything belonging to the dead was put out of sight and buried with them,

because it was feared a man's personality haunts over his possessions after death.

In the spirit of economic fellowship and tradition of communal living, some primitive hamlets are much in advance of the modern world. The communal life of the junglefolk in which almost everything is shared and in which the joy and sorrow of one is the joy and sorrow of the whole community is a beautiful thing to observe. Domestic fidelity is another virtue in which the tribes will stand as an object lesson to the whole world. In most of the tribes women hold an honourable place. Unfortunately, these are perishing before the chill breath of the so-called literary education and other modern influences.

The Government of Travancore have opened Vernacular Primary schools for the education of the tribes. It is reported that they are indifferent to their studies and do not attend schools regularly. Nomadic agriculture being their mainstay, the children do not ignore it in favour of study. The effect of literary education on the tribes is found to be harmful. The most harmful effect is on their singing and dancing. Their songs are of the soil and enshrine the genius of the people. They help us to understand their mind and temper, and touch that which is ever universal. There are songs of rare beauty and deep simplicity among the tribes.

Verrier Elwin stresses that the romance and gaiety of tribal life is necessary for its preservation and the tribe that dances does not die. The need for protection is regarded as most important in the solution of the aboriginal problem. The essential thing to do is not so much to uplift them into an uncongenial, social and economic sphere into which they cannot adapt themselves, as to restore them to the liberties of the countryside. Their education should be such as will be of practical value and enable them to preserve their cultural heritage and racial qualities. If the Wardha scheme can be modified to suit aboriginal conditions, it would be the ideal means of developing the tribesmen and leading them on to take their place in the modern civilized world.

The importance of a study of the tribes cannot be overestimated. 'Not long ago, there was a generally current idea that the manners and customs of savage tribes could only be of interest as curiosities, and their study was scarcely looked upon as a science. And yet what an extraordinarily useful influence this study has exercised in the last few decades in the history of law, the science of religion, moral psychology and sociology in general. It has among other things taught us to what extent civilized man still preserves the customs and ideas of the savages in his institutions in entire ignorance that he is so doing, for a nation's customs are like balls that seem to roll by their own impetus on through the centuries and often it is only the study of the primitive races that can give us an idea of the push that set the ball in motion.'

The idea of reservation of aboriginal areas caused much disquietude in British India. It was denounced as an attempt to divide the people of India into different groups with unjustifiable and discriminatory treatment to obstruct the growth of democratic institutions. The problem has not arisen in Travancore. The Forest Department has been the custodian of their interests against exploitation by advanced communities. It has tried to save them from wholesale extinction by unhealthy and adverse influences. The need for protection is regarded by all scientists as the most important thing in the case of the tribes. Verrier Elwin advocates for some of them a policy of temporary protection. The essential thing is not to uplift them into a social and economic sphere to which they cannot attach themselves, but to restore them to the liberties of the countryside. 'They are the real swadeshi products of India in whose presence everyone is foreign. They were here first. They should come first in our regard.'

## NOTES AND QUERIES

ORIGINAL notes, queries, answers to queries, quotations from journals and newspapers for this section should be sent to Dr Verrier Elwin, Patangarh P.O., Dindori Tahsil, Mandla District. Contributors are requested to type in double space on one side of the paper only, to give full and exact references and to follow carefully the suggestions 'To Contributors' published from time to time in *Man in India*.

### THE STUDY OF FOLKLORE

In his presidential address at the Deccan History Conference held recently in Hyderabad, Mr W. V. Grigson, C.S.I., I.C.S., referred to the importance of folklore and antiquarian studies.

'Who, professional or amateur, living or serving in this country of the Deccan could fail to be inspired by the great and romantic story of her past? Each district of this State has its history and traditions, of which living testimony is afforded by historic temples, mosques and lakes or fortress-crowned hilltops, while stone artifacts in abundance, stone-circles, rock-shelters (sometimes still inhabited), stone-alignments, menhirs, tumuli and cairns in many districts provide yet older links with the forgotten eras of history. To go about the Deccan blind to its past and to its fascinating present survivals would be to lose most of what can keep life worth living, work worth doing and the future worthy of hope and endeavour.

'Hyderabad also has several fine private libraries of mediæval and later Persian and Urdu manuscripts and printed books, calling aloud for classification and publication. Nawab Ali Yavar Jung Bahadur has referred to the great *Daftar-i-Diwani* collection, whereof the 20,000,000 or more documents of all kinds only some 3,000,000 (including *atiyat* or Crown Grant succession documents) were catalogued on the old unsatisfactory system and so far only 3,000 documents have been listed in a new card index. There is immense work to be done, nor can it be said what discoveries will result. At present the annual budget of the *Daftar-i-Diwani* is a bare 1½ lakhs of rupees. We must clearly double or treble that expenditure and make it a real focus for historical studies in the Deccan.

'I am deeply conscious of the need of a detailed economic history of the Deccan. For such studies too we have invaluable material in the *Daftar-i-Diwani* in the form of old Persian records of revenue settlements and revenue-farming, and contemporary *nirakhnamas* of wages and prices, all calling for the patient work of the research scholar in history and economics, material in fact such as W. H. Moreland would have considered as beyond value could he have had access to similar documents for his economic histories of Mughal India.

'Mention of yet another field of research, to which the attention of scholars, and in particular of this Conference, must be invited, was foreshadowed by my remarks earlier on the folklore of the Gonds. In many villages around such historic centres as Golkonda, Warangal, Daulatabad, Aurangabad, and Shorapur I believe there to be untapped stores of tales and ballads of the days of the past. Fact and fantasy may be so interwoven in this early literature as to make it difficult to distil factual history from it. But its systematic collection would throw great light upon what struck the villager's imagination in the past, his reaction to changes of dynasty, to invasion, and to disappearance of what seemed good to him. Work of a similar nature is being done for Middle India by Dr Verrier Elwin whose collections of what he calls "Specimens of the Oral Literature of Middle India" have led already to the publication by the Oxford University Press in Bombay of *The Folk-Songs of the Maikal Hills* and *The Folk-Tales of Mahakoshal*, the first two of a projected series of seven or eight volumes. Dr von Fürer-Haimendorf's researches in Adilabad have shown a wealth of similar material amongst our own Deccan tribes, some of which our Government have recently published in the Gondi language and the Nagari script

as text-books for the new aboriginal schools in the Gond country. Systematic recording of such material has long been overdue in India. Few studies can foster so healthy a national pride. Great strides in this direction have been made in Europe, especially in the Scandinavian and Teutonic countries and in England and Ireland. Sweden was the pioneer, and work there was started on a systematic scale so long ago as May 1630 under the auspices of King Gustavus Adolphus II. I would urge most strongly that our own University should be spurred by this Conference into considering similar work in the Deccan while there is yet time, before the standardization and rationalization of modern life have stilled the voice of the bard and the story-teller. I would also particularly stress the urgency in Hyderabad not only of folk museums in the life of her villages and tribal populations, but also, and above all, of a Hyderabad museum of Qutb Shahi and Mughal life, before a vast amount of material still in the hands of private owners disappears.

—*Hyderabad Information*, June 1945

### HAIR-CLIPPINGS

APROPPOS the cutting in *Man in India* for March 1944 about F. M. Montgomery's hair-clippings, a lady is alleged to have found herself sitting behind J. B. Priestley at the first night of his play, *They Came to a City*. She cut off a lock of his hair, but at the end of the performance she spoke to him and said, 'When I saw you were sitting in front of me, I cut off a lock of your hair. You can have it back.'

W. J. CULSHAW

### BHARTRIHARI STILL ALIVE

KING BHARTRIHARI, the sage poet of mediæval India, is a figure shrouded in perpetual mystery. The three centuries of poems he leaves behind, fascinate the Sanskrit world even now. Yet little is known about the man. All that we know about him from the broken legendary accounts is that he was the King of Avanti, Malva, brother of the great king Vikrama. Having been disillusioned about the value of worldly pleasures by the faithlessness of his adored queen Pingala, Bhartrihari bestowed the throne on his younger brother and lived in the forest as a recluse. He then wrote his famous poems on love, morality and renunciation.

To the average Hindu Bhartrihari is now a remote figure of no interest, though the scholar occasionally pays homage to him. The aboriginals of the Kaimur Range, however, still pay him a glowing tribute. Bhartrihari is called Bhartari by them. The Sahis of the tract have a considerable stock of legendary songs about him. They sing of his birth and marriage, his hunting expeditions and his love for justice. Every year when these aboriginals begin their famous autumnal Karma dances, a tribute is first paid to Bhartari. The note of the songs is warm and lively. Bhartari is still alive in the hills and continues to inspire the people. I possess only two pieces of this very fine folk-poetry. The first song commemorates the great event of the birth of Bhartari and the joy it created among the people. The other song is marvellously poetic and describes a hunting experience of the king.

Here are the songs :

#### I

King Bhartari  
By the name of Lalikar—  
The day he was born,  
Drums were beaten as announcement,  
Fresh green cow-dung was brought,  
With it the ground was cleaned.  
With six pegs was it marked.  
On it a water-jar was put.  
A silver lamp was also kept burning.  
From Kasi pundits were called.

They sang auspicious songs.  
 The ordinary folk danced the Karma  
 The farmers' faces lit with joy  
 Such was the king Bhartari  
 By the name of Lalikar.

## II

King Bhartari,  
 Also named Lalikar,  
 Went out hunting.  
 A deer was playing,  
 It was romping about ;  
 The King shot in a moment.  
 He shot in its direction,  
 The beautiful deer fell to the ground.  
 It got up for a while  
 And said  
 Give my hooves to the glorious cow,  
 So they will be worshipped in every house.  
 Give my horns to a warrior,  
 So he will fight in battle and die.  
 Give my hide to a sage,  
 So he will (sitting on it)  
 Contemplate in the forest.  
 Give my eyes to a wise woman,  
 So she will be praised in the world.

Thus from year to year Bhartari is remembered by the Sahis. The sage still blesses the vigorous dances and songs of the people, bubbling with romance and life.

DURGA N. BHAGVAT

## THE PUNISHMENT OF WITCHES

'If I was to tell of all the witch stories which are told amongst the people, these notes would have to swell out to undue proportions. Perhaps I should mention that Chhattisgarh has long had a reputation for witchcraft and similar cults. Sleeman, writing as far back as 1835 in his *Rambles and Recollections*, mentions these parts as having an unfavourable reputation. It is currently reported that in the old days when a witch was found she would be tied to the horns or the legs of a buffalo, and the buffalo was then unfurried till the victim was killed.'—E. M. Gordon, 'Notes concerning the People of Mungeli Tahsil, Bilaspore District.' *J. A. S. Beng.*, Vol. I (N. S., 1905), p. 189.

V. E.

## HUMAN SACRIFICE IN RANCHI DISTRICT

A CASE of human sacrifice by a Munda occurred in December 1939 in Doreya, P. S. Tamar, in the Khunti sub-division of Ranchi District. A certain Jagarnath Munda along with some other members of his village had been ill for a time. There was a half-witted youth (*konka*) in the village and one night that December, Jagarnath, Ramjiban and Mangal Munda took him to the sacred grove, tied his ankles and hands and forced him to a kneeling posture. After offering some unboiled rice Jagarnath then beheaded him with a sword. The skull of the dead youth was cracked open with an axe and his brain was taken out, cooked with rice and eaten by the three men. The body was then taken away and buried. The motive for the sacrifice was unfortunately never fully investigated and while the fact of sacrifice seems undisputed, the Munda ideas involved are far from clear.

W. G. A.

## THE MOTHER'S MILK IN MAGIC AND MEDICINE

ALL the secretions of a woman's body play their part in magic. The menstrual blood is used in love-charms and in black magic. The lochial



discharge assists hunting and the crops. The milk from a mother's breasts is a valuable medicine for bad eyesight. If the new-born child's eyes do not open by the second day, the mother bathes them in her own milk before putting it to the breast. The milk may also be dropped into sore red eyes or applied to burns. It is occasionally used in love-charms.

V. E.

#### THE LOCHIAL DISCHARGE IN MAGIC

Not only the mother's milk, but even her lochial discharge is used in magic. The Baigas take the cloth that is soiled with the lochial discharge and put it on the spikes of the spear-traps that are set round their clearings. It is believed that more animals will be attracted and killed and the crops will do better. The mother herself must come and offer a goat and a grasshopper in the same clearing. If she fails to do so, it may be very dangerous—in Rajadhar, Gochia Baiga was eaten by a tiger, and in Boria (Kawardha State) Lamu Baiga's son died, because this duty was left unfulfilled.

The lochial discharge of a primipara may be used in a love-charm. Mixed with oil and other ingredients it is mixed in the girl's food and rouses her affection for her lover.

V. E.

## REVIEWS

H. N. C. STEVENSON, *The Hill Peoples of Burma*. 50 pp, 19 half-tone illustrations and 2 maps (Longmans, Calcutta, As. 8).

H. N. C. STEVENSON, *The Economics of the Central Chin Tribes*. xv+200 pp, 22 half-tone plates and 3 maps, with many diagrams and drawings (Government of Burma).

*The Hill Peoples of Burma* is one of Longmans' Burma Pamphlets and is a model of its kind, concise, informative, freshly and interestingly written, illustrated by the most charming pictures. Longmans' Calcutta office has established a high reputation in book-production and here the publisher's technique in association with the author's skill with camera and pen has produced a little work which it is a pleasure to handle and a liberal education to read. The author's remarks on the future of Burma's tribes would apply also to many of the Indian highlanders, and politicians in a hurry would do well to ponder them.

If the hill tribes of Burma are to develop in a way which will be to their benefit and which will give to Burma that priceless boon, a prosperous hinterland in which available public funds can be devoted to progress instead of to the maintenance of great armies of suppression and defence, the dangers of detribalization and over-rapid assimilation of the wrong types of foreign culture must be avoided at all costs. In this connection it is important to remember that the cultures of the Burmese, the Indian and the Chinese are just as foreign to these hill peoples as the cultures of the West.

Mr Stevenson's larger work, which was submitted as a thesis for the Diploma of Anthropology at the University of London, is prefaced by some wise paragraphs from the Governor of Burma. 'No reconstruction,' says His Excellency, 'can hope to be successful unless and until we thoroughly understand the spiritual and physical needs of the people whom we earnestly hope to assist along the road to a fuller and better life. Progress will not necessarily come to these tribes by a mere imposition of our Western ideas upon what may seem to us to be a primitive people.'

Mr Stevenson's book marks a new departure in the anthropology of Greater India. There has been nothing quite like it—there has certainly been nothing so good—in this particular line before. I am not, however, quite sure that I altogether agree with Mr Stevenson in his condemnation of the older men. 'Amateur ethnographers,' he says, 'were apt to concentrate either on technology of history alone, or on the more bizarre aspects of culture. Much was written of the *form* of religious ritual, little or nothing of its *function* in tribal life. The humdrum details of the village scene took second place to the more titillating minutiae of sex life and the robust horrors of tribal war, head-hunting, sorcery and slavery!' If I were to find this last delicious sentence on a scrap of paper in the middle of the Sahara I would at once shout 'L. S. E.' It is admirably put, but is it really true? Malinowski was very fond of tilting against these sensation-hunters—but who were they? Codrington? There has never been a functionalist to beat him. And in India? Dalton? Risley? The excellent and forgotten Fawcett? I have read as much of the older stuff as most people, and what strikes me about it is not its direction so much as its method. The amateur ethnographers of the nineties were just as interested as Mr Stevenson in the humdrum details of the village scene, but they did not take so much trouble; they did not observe so minutely, they sweated less, they got up later. And personally, if I wanted to praise Mr Stevenson's work, I would say that it excels because of his genius for taking pains, because he sees more than his predecessors, not because he looks at different things. On my table lies another book—not by one of the old men, but by a young Indian, also on economics. When I compare the two works, the difference lies in just this: Mr. Stevenson has taken more trouble. He has been longer at it, he has endured boredom and fatigue, he has gone on and on (in anthropology longevity is the thing), and when his book was ready he read the proofs—which my Indian friend did not—he verified his references and he produced a work which—so far as I can judge—is almost without technical flaw. But in this

other book even the Index is not in alphabetical order, the Bibliography allots books to the wrong authors and the pictures are a scandal and an offence.

But this is a digression. Mr Stevenson's book is in three parts—Introductory, Production, Distribution and Consumption. After an important opening chapter on the application of economic theory to Chin culture, the author describes the social background of the people and proceeds to discussions of agriculture, animal husbandry, hunting and fishing, forest products, land tenure, trade and wage-earning. All this is done with a wealth of detail which would indeed have been much fuller had not many of Mr Stevenson's notes perished when the Japanese overran his home. That his manuscript survived at all is due to Mrs Stevenson's foresight—for which she deserves an honorary doctorate. Part III of the book deals with Distribution and Consumption. There is a careful and detailed study of the economics of a household in which the relative position of individual members, their duties and responsibilities, is supplemented by a useful table of the debits and credits of a normal home. Perhaps the most important, as it is certainly the most interesting, chapter in the book is that headed 'The Economics of Social Obligations.' Everyone is interested in food, and the place of feasting in tribal life, the reason for it, the way it works, is quite admirably described and is illustrated by some charming diagrams of pigs and cattle which show how their flesh is distributed. Valuable chapters follow on the economics of justice, the economics of religious ritual, wealth, poverty and debt and the book ends with a plea for a common basis of record in comparative economics and for the application of scientific ethnography to the administration of the Chin Hills.

It is difficult to overpraise this study. Fresh, vigorous, absorbing inspired by the fullest sympathy with his people and a deep affection for them, the value of Mr Stevenson's book is enhanced by the way it has been produced. No publisher's name is given, but I am glad to see that my old friends the Times of India Press, Bombay, did the work of printing and illustration. I presume that Mr Stevenson himself dealt with the details of publication. If so, he is warmly to be congratulated on his expertness in an important side-line of authorship. His illustrations are excellent and are produced as they ought to be—big and bleeding all round in the modern style; a certain sacrifice of sharpness is of small account compared to the artistic and dramatic effect achieved.

A final word of praise is due to Mr Stevenson's style. It is all bone and sinew without fat, simple, almost diagrammatic in its clarity. Yet though normally austere, Mr Stevenson can write with passion and beauty as the following extract will show. It describes the nightly homage of the bereaved to their dead.

A long dolorous wail echoes through the night, followed by the pitiful keening of a mother as she kneels before the family vault and cries to the cold stone to yield up her first-born. Step by step she recites the little life story, the endearing ways, the happy smile, the lingering, fight with death. Others take it up, each mourning for their lost ones and for a while the village rings with their drear sorrowing. It is very hard to listen to. Suddenly it ends. . .

But life goes on, the more fiercely to be enjoyed by the very emphasis on its narrow span. From right and left comes the gentle strumming of the *thingthang* and a queer lilt of song—youth must be served and maidens must be courted.

So let us leave the village scene. Its characters are strangely like those of our own world, some brave, some craven; some good and just, others deceitful and unscrupulous; vanity and cupidity go hand in hand with generosity and the humble heart. In it there is the universal compound of strain and ease, of laughter and tears, of want and plenty, and of living and dying.

May Mr Stevenson long continue in his work of science and humanity and may he give us many more works of the flavour and distinction of *The Economics of the Central Chin Tribes*.

V. E.

# MAN IN INDIA

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## COMMENT

### A REBELLION NUMBER

IN THIS NUMBER *Man in India* focuses attention on the rebellions of aboriginal tribesmen. These revolts have been neither numerous nor gravely frequent, yet there is scarcely any major tribe in Middle or Eastern India which at some time in the last one hundred and fifty years has not resorted to this gesture of despair.

To define a rebellion as an armed assault on established authority may obscure in many cases the nature of these risings. In certain instances, 'established authority' was undoubtedly attacked but often it was less a remotely paternal Government which inspired the outbreak than its local embodiments.

'In 1879 disturbance which broke out among the Koya of the Rampa area of East Godavari district spread to the Malkangiri taluk. It was fanned by the scandalous conduct of the local police. The Inspector had "worried and insulted all the respectable people in the country by his violence, extortion, drunkenness and lechery. The constables of course followed suit." Roads near the stations were deserted in consequence, and markets were closed. In April 1880 Tamma Dora, the great Koya leader, entered the taluk and captured the Podeh police-station after a fight. Colonel Macquoid of the Hyderabad Contingent marched with 100 men to protect Motu, but was attacked on 6 May and retreated. This set the country in a blaze and Tamma Dora was hailed as the Raja of Southern Malkangiri. Later on, however, he was driven back to the Rampa jungles and in July 1880, refusing to surrender, was attacked and shot by the police.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> W. Francis, *Visagapatam District Gazetteer* (Madras, 1907), pp. 280 f.

In the Santal rebellion, it was the absence of Government rather than its presence which enabled the local police to loot and bully, and at last induced the Santals to kill them in return.

But oppression by local agents, if often a powerful type of provocation was in other cases only incidental to other issues. 'The Bhuinhurs,' said Dalton, 'cling most tenaciously to their Bhuinhurree lands. Insurrections have followed attempts to disturb these tenures, and even now such attempts are sure to lead to serious affrays. The Kol insurrection of 1833 was, without doubt, mainly caused by the encroachments of alien farmers and sub-proprietors on the rights of the descendants of the old settlers. The first burst of the outbreak was a pretty broad hint, a general conflagration of the houses of alien farmers and sub-proprietors and the massacre of all that the incensed Kols could find.'<sup>1</sup>

In April of this year widespread disturbances were reported in the Rajshahi district of Bengal arising out of Muhammadan interference with Santal women. In Chota Nagpur, it was land, in Rajshahi, sex—yet in both cases violations of a tribal system led to similar results—an attack on marauders and finally a conflict with 'Law and Order.'

In such circumstances, repression is both necessary and inevitable, for even for the tribesmen the rule of killing or pillage is the negation of tribal life. The pathos of such situations is that in order to defend their major values the tribes should be impelled to employ non-tribal methods. To those who have seen the disciplined conduct of tribal councils, the dignified administration of tribal justice by the tribesmen themselves, the anarchy of revolt must seem the very antithesis of all that is truly tribal.

If a moral can be drawn from these records of tribal revolt, it is the overwhelming importance of sympathy and understanding, and of wise and expert knowledge on the part of those who administer the aboriginals of India.

<sup>1</sup> E. T. Dalton, 'The "Kols" of Chota-Nagpur,' *J.A.S.B.*, Vol. XXXV, part II (1866), pp. 174-5.

# SANTAL REBELLION SONGS

## I

In the Kadam at the village end  
Is a parrot sitting  
Kanhū  
It is eating a hook  
Catch it, Kanhū  
Kill it for an omen.

## II

Kenaram Becharam  
Longed for land in Piparjuri  
They bound the Litipara *manjhi*  
And took him to the Sahib's door.

## III

The Sub-inspector of Amrapara  
The Daroga of Jangipur  
Sido and Kanhū  
For nothing they were bound.

## IV

On Sawalak hill  
Dato Manjhi's daughter  
Hanged herself from a mango  
At Gopikandar Bungalow  
The Deputy held his court  
And tired us with his questions.

## V

Bhagat of Amrapara  
Kenaram Bhagat  
Sido Kanhū  
For nothing they were bound.

## VI

In Amrapara  
In Pakaur thana  
In the office of Pirthi Singh  
For nothing, nothing  
The Hakim tied him with a rope.

## VII

Sido, why are you bathed in blood?  
Kanhū, why do you cry *Hul, Hul*?  
For our people we have bathed in blood  
For the trader thieves  
Have robbed us of our land.<sup>1</sup>

W. G. ARCHER.

<sup>1</sup> Originals at Nos 1505, 1490, 1492, 1495, 1497, 1941 and 1489, G. G. Soren and W. G. Archer, *Hor Seven* (Dumka, 1943).

# ABORIGINAL REBELLIONS IN THE DECCAN

BY CHRISTOPH VON FÜRER-HAIMENDORF

REBELLIONS of aboriginal tribesmen against the authority of Government are among the most tragic conflicts between rulers and ruled. Whatever course the clash may take, it is always a hopeless struggle of the weak against the strong, the simple-minded and uninformed against the organized resources of a powerful system. There may be loss of life on both sides, but it is always the aboriginals who court ruin and economic distress. I do not refer here to the risings of war-like frontier tribes: risings which are often more in the nature of resistance to the establishment of Government's authority than a challenge to an existing administration, but to the rebellions of primitive aboriginal tribes of Peninsular India, such as the Santal Rebellion in Bihar, the Bhil Rebellion in Khandesh and the Rampa Rebellion in the East Godavari District. All these rebellions were defensive movements: they were the last resort of tribesmen driven to despair by the encroachments of outsiders on their land or economic resources. As such they could have all been avoided had the authorities recognized the aboriginals' grievances and taken steps to remedy them not, as it happened in most cases, after the rising, but before the pressure on the tribesmen had made an outbreak unavoidable. Indeed anyone with first hand experience of conditions in the backward areas and of the appalling oppression and exploitation to which many aboriginals are subjected at the hands of more advanced populations must be surprised, not by the occurrence of risings, but by the infrequency of violent reaction on the part of the aboriginals to the loss of their ancestral lands and to their economic enslavement. If Nagas, Chins, Daflas or Abors, not to speak of the tribes of the North-West Frontier were exposed to the injustices suffered by Gonds or Reddis, murder and violence would be the order of the day, but the tribes of Middle India and the Deccan are on the whole so gentle and inoffensive that extreme provocation is necessary before they take the law into their own hands.

There are two main causes which in the past have led to armed risings of aboriginals: the first is exploitation by money-lenders, traders and contractors as well as by minor Government officials; the second the expropriation of the aboriginals' land by cultivators and landlords of more advanced communities or by Government in the course of the reservation of forests. In the first case the responsibility of the administration lies in countenancing a state of affairs in which unscrupulous new-comers can grow fat at the expense of the aboriginals, and in the second an active disregard of the tribesmen's rights on their ancestral land is added to the faults of a policy of *laissez faire*. On the part of administrators has been in both cases ignorance and indifference rather than actual ill-will towards the aboriginals which prevented them

from affording protection against oppression and recognizing their fundamental claim to the land on which they and their forefathers found their living.

Two examples from the Deccan may illustrate this point. The first is the so-called Rampa Rebellion, a large-scale insurrection of the Hill Reddis of the East Godavari District and the second a recent case of local defiance of the authority of Government by several hundred Gonds in the Adilabad District of Hyderabad.

The Hill Reddis are a tribe of primitive shifting cultivators inhabiting the Eastern Ghats to both sides of the Godavari gorge.<sup>1</sup> Scattered over the hills, in small family-groups possessing no other economic resources than the produce of the jungles and the fruits of their hill-fields that are worked only with axe and digging-stick, and evincing very little tribal cohesion, they strike one as timid and inoffensive, a people with no other wish than to be left alone in the enjoyment of their forests. Yet in the Rampa Rebellion these same Reddis proved tenacious and resourceful fighters, whom to subdue required several regiments of regular troops.

What were the causes for that outbreak of violence? At the time of the cession of the Northern Circars to the East India Company the Rampa country, which falls now within the Chodavaram Taluq, was found in the possession of a ruling chief alternatively styled zamindar, *mansabdar*, or raja. The earliest records describe the Rampa Zamindar as a ruler as independent as the Raja of Bastar, and though he was himself not a Reddi, the hereditary chieftains or *muttadar* of the Hill Reddis recognized him as their feudal lord. How the Rampa *mansabdar* originally gained possession of the country and by what means they succeeded in controlling the independent and elusive hill-people is not known, but whatever power they wielded, they concentrated on the extraction of tribute and did not interfere with the internal affairs of the Reddis.

At the time of the revenue settlement of 1802-03 the Rampa country seems to have been 'entirely disregarded as if it had not existed and no settlement of any part was made.'<sup>2</sup> Subsequently the *mansabdar* Ram Bhupati Devu is reported to have seized some villages in the plains, but was driven from them and made to acknowledge 'for ever the sovereignty of the Company.' In 1813 A.D., a settlement was made with Ram Bhupati Devu for the first time. 'The villages he had taken were restored to him as *mokhasas* <sup>3</sup>, and, along with his ancestral possessions in the

<sup>1</sup> For a description of Reddi economics see my article, 'Primitive Aboriginal Cultures in the Deccan', *Man in India*, Vol. XXIV (1944), pp. 126-8.

<sup>2</sup> *Gazetteer of the East Godavari District*, 1907, p. 272. The following quotations in inverted commas are all from this Gazetteer, pp. 272-4, unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>3</sup> *Mokhasas* are village leased out by Government against a fixed revenue.



hills, were confirmed to him free of *peshkash*<sup>1</sup> on condition that he maintained order in them and prevented incursions into the low country. He appears to have leased his villages to certain subordinate hill-chiefs or *muttadars*<sup>2</sup> whom he required to keep order in their own charges and from whom he received an income of Rs. 8,750 per annum. These were the ancestors of the present *muttadars*.

Ram Bhupati Devu died leaving no legitimate male heir and was succeeded by his daughter. But after years of disturbances of various kinds, she surrendered the estate in favour of her illegitimate half-brother.

In 1848, after protracted negotiations, the *muttadars* agreed to accept this man as *mansabdar* and to perform their old police duties on condition that their united quit-rents should not exceed Rs. 1,000 and that the *mansabdar* should never attempt to exact more from them.

The *mansabdar* agreed to this, but quickly broke his promise. His confiscations of *muttas* and oppression of the people resulted in risings against his authority in 1859 and 1861: and such was the hatred he inspired that when, in 1862, he attempted to go and reside in his property an insurrection arose which had to be put down by a strong force of police. He continued his depredations, however, and by 1879 had succeeded in getting eight *muttas* into his own enjoyment, had doubled the quit-rent in several others, and was deriving a considerable revenue from taxes on fuel and grazing and other unauthorised cesses.

He succeeded in doing this largely by making it appear, sometimes by disgraceful devices, that all his actions had the sanction of Government; and some of the *muttadars* who complained of the *mansabdar*'s exactions were referred to the Civil Courts, though the hillmen are notorious for their dread of the plains. The growing discontent among the people was increased by new *abkari* regulations preventing the drawing of toddy for domestic purposes and leasing the toddy revenue to renters. These renters demanded that the *muttadars* should pay fees (called *chigurupannu*) for the right to tap toddy, and the *mansabdar* threatened to levy an additional tax, called *modalupannu*, at the rate of one-half or two-thirds of the *chigurupannu*.

This was the last straw and was the immediate cause of the Rampa Rebellion of 1879. The unpopularity of the police, who had assisted in introducing the new toddy rules and also oppressed the people on their own account, was a contributory cause. The people said that 'they could not stand all the taxes that were being imposed; that three years ago came the *chigurupannu*;

<sup>1</sup> *Peshkash* is the fixed land revenue payable to Government by estate owners.

<sup>2</sup> *Muttadars* are ordinarily owners of estates auctioned by Government, but here the term is used for the Hill Reddi chieftains, who paid tribute to the *mansabdar*.

that this year the *mansabdar* was demanding *modalupannu*: that 'the constables were extorting fowls: and that as they could not live they might as well kill the constables and die.' The operation of the civil law of the country was an additional grievance. Traders from the low country had taken advantage of the simplicity of the hillmen, 'who would much sooner walk into a tiger's den than put in an appearance in the Rajahmundry court', to make unfair contracts with them, and then if these were not fulfilled according to the trader's own interpretation, to file suits against them, obtain *ex parte* decrees, and distrain as much of their property as they could lay hands on. In satisfaction of a debt of Rs. 5, cattle and produce worth Rs. 100 had sometimes been carried off in this manner, and sometimes, it was said, the formality of a suit was dispensed with, and the trader, accompanied by a friend personating an officer of the court, made the distraint without any authority whatever. The hill-people laid the blame of all this injustice on Government and Government rules and regulations and thought that their only remedy lay in rising against the authorities.

The actual course of the rebellion is here of secondary interest and a short outline will suffice. The ringleaders were Chandraya of Lagarayi, Sambaya of Kutravada, Thamman Dora of Bhupatipalem and Ambul Reddi of Boduluru. Samabaya was apparently the grandfather of Pulikanta Sambaya the present *muttadar* of Kutravada, who is not of Reddi, but of Jangam caste, and who told me that his grandfather had been the 'guru' of the local *muttadar* and had died in jail where he had been confined for taking part in the rebellion and inflaming the insurgents with his prophecies. Thamman Dora was probably a Koya, for Koyas describe themselves in these parts as Koya Doras and today a number of *muttadar* in the vicinity of Rampa are not Reddis but Koyas.

The first outbreak of the rebellion occurred in March 1879 when six policemen were captured by disaffected tribesmen under Thamman Dora near Boduluru, a village 22 miles north of Chodavaram, and kept in custody for several days. 'Then they were taken to Kodigandi where, under a tamarind tree, Thamman Dora with his own hands severed the heads of the head-constable and one constable as a sacrifice in the presence of 200 of his hillmen.<sup>1</sup> Later the rebels attacked the Chodavaram police station and succeeded in burning the police station at Addatigala, the headquarters of the Ellavaram Taluq. Soon the whole Rampa country was ablaze and the rebellion assumed serious proportions.

In the next month (April) the disturbance spread to the Golconda hills of Vizagapatam, and in July to the Rekapalli country in Bhadrachalam, but the causes of the disaffection there were essentially different from those operating in Rampa itself."

<sup>1</sup> M. R. Ry. Seshagiri Rao Avargal, *Notes on the Rampa Agency, East Godavari District* (Madras, 1931), p. 11.

In Rekapalli, when under the Central Provinces administration, *podu* (i.e., shifting) cultivation had been almost unrestricted and the assessment on it had been only four annas an axe. But when this area was transferred in 1863 the Madras Government almost trebled the assessment, excluded the cultivators from certain tracts, and levied a tax on the felling of certain species of reserved trees. These new taxes and restrictions were considered a grievance, and it was for this reason that the Rampa leaders found adherents in the Rekapalli country.

'The disturbed area now comprised over 5,000 square miles of wooded and hilly country. The operations of the troops were much hampered by the nature of the ground, and the malcontents took advantage of their superior knowledge of the country to maintain a harassing guerilla warfare, avoiding all direct encounters with the troops, but attacking isolated police stations and burning or looting the villages of those who assisted the authorities. Troops were hastened up to the country, and by the end of 1879 the Government forces included besides several hundred police drafted from neighbouring districts, as many as six regiments of Madras infantry, two companies of a sappers and miners and a squadron of cavalry and a wing of infantry from the Hyderabad contingent.'

Though in Rampa quiet was restored in August 1879, in other areas the rebellion was not entirely suppressed until November 1880. The *mansabdar* of Rampa was deposed and Government made the settlement with the individual *muttadar* direct.

From our point of view the history of the Rampa Rebellion is important in two respects: it shows firstly that aboriginals, even if inherently not of a warlike character are capable of considerable efforts when driven to extremities, and secondly that it is both inexpedient and dangerous to allow the control and exploitation of aboriginal populations to fall into the hands of unscrupulous and unsupervised outsiders, who although not directly responsible to Government, are backed by the authority of the police and the law-courts. For while the outsiders understand how to use the laws of the land to their own advantage and are assisted in their designs by the aboriginal's dread of contact with the police, the aboriginals are in the unenviable position that any use of force, which is the only means in their power to free themselves from the oppression of their exploiters, brings them into conflict with the authority of the State.

In the East Godavari Agency the conditions of the aboriginals has considerably improved since the times of the Rampa Rebellion. The necessity of devising special methods for administering primitive populations was then forcefully brought before the eyes of the authorities and steps have been taken to protect the aboriginals from the encroachment of outsiders and to fortify them through education for competition with other sections of the population.

Whereas the Rampa Rebellion was caused by the inaction of the authorities in the face of the exploitation of the aborigines by outsiders rather than by any positive action on the part of Government, a rising of Gonds and Kolams in the Adilabad District of Hyderabad in 1940 was due to a Land and Forest Policy which ran directly counter to the needs and legitimate rights of the aboriginal tribesmen. Like every other tribal insurrection it must be viewed against the background of the general economic conditions.<sup>1</sup>

Until less than a hundred years ago the greater part of the Adilabad District was a country rich in forest, poor in communications, and of little economic and political importance. It was inhabited mainly by Gonds and by the more primitive tribe of Kolams. A feudal system prevailed then among the Gonds, who, while recognizing the sovereignty of the Nizam, lived to all practical purposes under the jurisdiction of their tribal heads. At that time they were not only the ruling race, but the principal holders and cultivators of the land. The administration established by the Nizam's Government did not at first affect conditions among the bulk of the aboriginal population, but a radical change in the position occurred when with the improvement of communications advanced populations of Telugu and Maratha stock flooded the District both from the south and the north, and occupied such lands as had become easy of access. Ignorant of the laws of the State, and in many cases of the language both of the administration and of the new-comers, and unfamiliar with revenue procedure, many Gonds then lost their holdings to immigrant cultivators and whole Gond villages fell into the hands of absentee landlords. The latter managed their villages as commercial enterprises, and as they had naturally an interest to settle good cultivators, they encouraged the immigration of non-aboriginals and gradually replaced their Gond tenants, whose agricultural methods were comparatively backward, by more experienced cultivators, capable of paying higher rents. Until 1945 Hyderabad had no tenancy act and in the absence of a settlement landlords could raise the rents at their discretion; this process assumed in recent times dangerous proportions and every year Gonds were ousted from villages where their families had lived for generations.

Whereas in the plains and valleys many Gonds were driven from their lands by economically more powerful new-comers, those in the hills were faced by an equally drastic curtailment of their rights resulting from the introduction of forest-conservancy. Until as late as fifty years ago the aborigines of the hills were subject to no restrictions in the choice of land for cultivation. The Kolams and Naikpods practised shifting-cultivation on hill-sides

<sup>1</sup> A detailed account of the aboriginal problem in the Adilabad District is contained in my reports published under the title *Tribal Hyderabad* by the Revenue Department, Government of H. E. H. the Nizam (Hyderabad 1945).

and the Gonds of most villages cultivated mainly the light soils of gentle slopes and hill-tops in more or less regular rotation. This system came to an end, however, when forest lines were drawn round the villages, which were thus established as enclaves within the reserved forest. The general idea in this demarcation of forest lines was to extend the reserved forest over all those areas which were not actually under cultivation. Thereby a great deal of land which had in former years been cultivated in rotation and which at the time of the demarcation was lying fallow, was included in the reserve and the aborigines were deprived of its future use.

But enclaves were established only where at least part of the cultivated land was held on *patta*. Villages where the Gonds had no such occupancy rights were completely included in the reserved forest and the inhabitants given a time-limit to evacuate the village-lands. In pursuance of this forest policy the authorities enforced the disbandment of many villages that had been inhabited for generations, and the Gonds and Kolams expelled from their ancestral lands had no other choice but to seek a living by working for non-aboriginal landlords.

The bitterness created among the aborigines by the alienation of their land in the plains and their expulsion from many tracts in the hills, was sharpened by many petty tyrannies and exactions on the part of Forest and Police subordinates, and in 1940 their disaffection had reached a stage where only a spark was needed to set ablaze the smouldering resentment and despair. This spark was provided by the forcible disbandment of a group of Gond and Kolam settlements in the Dhanora State Forest, and for the first time in their unequal struggle against the ruthlessness of non-aboriginal landlords and the indifference of officials to their needs, did the Gonds find a leader capable of rallying hundreds of tribesmen to concerted action.

This leader was Kumra Bhimu and the story of his repeated and unsuccessful attempts to contact the District Officers and to enlist their sympathy for the aborigines' difficulties makes sad reading. Kumra Bhimu's home-village was Sankepalli, about five miles from Asifabad, and it was in that area that in recent years practically all the aborigines' land had fallen into the hands of absentee-landlords and that most Gonds had been displaced by immigrant cultivators. Bhimu, who was of more than usual intelligence and could read and write, was not content to exist precariously as an agricultural labourer, and having failed to establish himself as tenant in the villages of non-aboriginal landlords, he left the plains and settled at Babijheri, a hill-village of a dozen Gond houses and some fifty Kolam and Naikpod houses scattered in small hamlets round the main-settlement. But when the boundaries of the Dhanora State Forest were demarcated, Babijheri, like many other villages, was not established as an enclave, and the inhabitants, none of whom had *patta* rights, were

told that they must evacuate the village. When by the fixed date they had not left, all their houses were burnt by forest-guards. Many Kolams and Naikpods dispersed and moved into the neighbouring *taluk*, but the Gonds and nine households of Kolams applied for permission to settle at Jhoreghat, a site at no great distance from Babijheri. The minor revenue officials raised no objection, but the forester and forest-guards used the opportunity to extract from the Gonds several hundred rupees under the threat that unless they paid, Jhoreghat just as Babijheri would be burnt. Having satisfied these demands of the forest subordinates, the Gonds started clearing the land for cultivation, but when after a short time they were faced with new exactions, Bhimu and four other Gonds went to Hyderabad in the hope of obtaining permission to remain at Jhoreghat. In the capital they did not know where to apply, but it seems that in some office or other they were given a document which they took to be the required permission. Great was therefore their disappointment when the local Forest authorities still insisted on the evacuation of Jhoreghat. The initial payments to forest subordinates and the journey to Hyderabad had exhausted their credit and all their resources, and to leave Jhoreghat meant complete economic ruin. They refused to move and Bhimu sent once more written petitions to the Forest and Revenue Officers of the District. But these petitions had no effect and the Forest Ranger sent a party of forest-guards reinforced by an armed Arab to effect the evacuation of the Jhoreghat. This party started by burning without warning some of the outlying settlements, and when the Gonds, enraged by the burning of their houses opposed them, the Arab shot at Bhimu and wounded him in the hand. At this the assembled Gonds fell upon the party, beat the forest-guards and forced them to make a hasty retreat.

The Gonds and Kolams had no illusions as to the seriousness of the situation. They knew that their triumph would be short-lived and that their arrest and the destruction of their village could be only a matter of days. But Bhimu decided that this time they would not yield and he succeeded in persuading several hundred malcontent Gonds and Kolams to support him in resisting the disbandment of Jhoreghat. The news of his decision to brave the Forest authorities who in recent years had rendered homeless and destitute thousands of Gonds and Kolams by expelling them from their ancestral land, spread like wild-fire through the hills, and men who had nothing to lose and were burning with resentment against a policy which deprived Gonds and Kolams of their land while enabling wealthy new-comers to establish themselves in all the fertile valleys and plains rallied in hundreds to Bhimu's cause. Their belief in his leadership was strengthened by his claim to supernatural powers. Like many Gond *bhaktal* or seers, men capable of trance-experiences and liable to possession by

gods, Bhimu was credited with the faculty of hearing the voices of deities and to act under their guidance. But this alone would not have enabled him to rouse hundreds of peaceful cultivators against the authority of the State if the aboriginals' temper had not already been near boiling-point. Rumours current among the non-aboriginals of the District had it that he intended to found a 'Gond Raj,' but this is not born out either by the accounts of his Gond followers nor by the letters which he continued to address to the authorities. In these he demanded only permission to live and cultivate at Jhoreghat and freedom from the exactions of forest-subordinates and from plough-tax and grazing-fees, whose collection had been used as a pretext for all sorts of illegal extortions of cash and provisions.

Unfortunately no responsible officer contacted Bhimu and the Gonds collected at Jhoreghat at the time when they were still sending written messages, and when at last the Taluqdar, as the head of the District, approached Bhimu's hill redoubt, with a large police force, the Gonds were partly too excited and partly, no doubt, too frightened to state their grievances in direct negotiations. Messengers, themselves probably in a state of excitement and fear, went backwards and forwards between the two camps, but the Taluqdar's demand that Bhimu and his followers should give themselves up to the police was met by the counter-demand that the Gonds and Kolams should be left in undisturbed possession of Jhoreghat and the land they had begun to cultivate. There can be no doubt that even then any person enjoying the confidence of the aboriginals could have avoided a clash, but such a person did not exist, for the District officers had very little contact with and even less knowledge of the Gonds and Kolams.

By the time the Government party advanced on the hill where Bhimu had collected his followers, the Gonds had worked themselves into a frenzy and stood firm brandishing swords and ceremonial spears. Bhimu, who believed himself impervious to bullets, was obviously in a state of extreme excitement and no longer amenable to reason. A shot fell from the crowd of Gonds, but hit no one. Then the police opened fire and killed Bhimu and ten other Gonds on the spot. Many more were wounded and the rest was partly arrested and partly dispersed.

Thus ended the short-lived insurrection of the Adilabad Gonds and when a year later I came to the district, I found the aboriginals in a state of unrelieved gloom and frustration. They realized that any opposition to Government must lead to disaster, but saw no hope of averting the collapse of tribal economy and freedom threatened alike by a rigorous Forest policy and the encroachment of rapacious immigrants backed by the full force of the State.

Fortunately the picture has changed since then. In a number of reports, now available in print, I was able to draw the attention of H. E. H. the Nizam's Government to the deplorable condition

of the aborigines and to suggest measures for administrative reform and a liberalization of Forest policy. Many of these suggestions have been adopted and Government provided the funds for a Gond Education Scheme which is to enable the Gonds to safeguard their own interests.<sup>1</sup> The extent to which the Hyderabad Government has recently revised its policy vis-a-vis the aborigines and thereby removed many of the causes that led to the Gond Rebellion in 1940 may be judged from a quotation from the Foreword to *Tribal Hyderabad* by W. V. Grigson, C.S.I., I.C.S., Revenue and Police Member of H. E. H. the Nizam's Executive Council: 'In the Adilabad District there has been a partial overhaul of the administrative personnel; a Special Officer for the aboriginal areas with headquarters at Marlavai in Utnur Taluq has been appointed, and a decision come to in regard to areas to be retained as forest or leased for distribution among the aboriginal cultivators in *patta* right; already *patas* have been granted for many thousand of acres. Above all the work of establishing a training centre for aboriginal teachers at Marlavai and basing upon it a network of aboriginal schools is expanding rapidly. Marlavai has even turned out roughly trained Gonds able to work as *gumashta patwaris*, and with the appointment also by the Inspector General of Forests of some aborigines as forest watchers and guards the aboriginal has begun to think that the Government may be his Government after all. There is at least a new spirit of hope in the district.'

Thus Bhimu and his followers have not died in vain. The affray at Jhoreghat and the subsequent investigations into the causes of the Gonds' dissatisfaction, have made it clear that the position of the aborigines in Adilabad constitutes a major problem. There had never been any deliberate and conscious oppression of aborigines on the part of H. E. H. the Nizam's Government, but owing to the lack of information on the backward areas of the State the local exploiter and bully and the irresponsible and narrow-minded petty official had remained there in practically supreme control. Unvocal and uneducated as they were, the aborigines had no means of bringing their grievances to the notice of Government and all those who profited from their exploitation—absentee landlords, *patwaris* and Forest and Police subordinates—succeeded only too well in erecting a screen which prevented even the higher District officers from realizing the plight of the autochthonous tribesmen. This unhappy state of affairs has now come to an end and while to-day the aboriginal needs still protection and guidance by enlightened officers of Government, it is hoped that to-morrow he will be able to meet the other communities of H. E. H. the Nizam's Dominions on equal terms.

<sup>1</sup> The principles which I followed in the organization of the Gond Education Scheme are outlined in my article 'Aboriginal Education in Hyderabad,' *The Indian Journal of Social Work*, Vol. V (1944), No. 2.



# THE SANTAL REBELLION

BY W. J. CULSHAW & W. G. ARCHER

## I

Saheb rule is trouble full,  
Shall we go or shall we stay ?  
Eating, drinking, clothing,  
For everything we're troubled ;  
Shall we go or shall we stay ? (Lagre song)

WRITING in 1867, some twelve years after the outbreak of the *Hul* or Santal rebellion, E. G. Man summarised its causes in the following manner:—'1st—the grasping and rapacious spirit influencing the mahajuns or money lenders in their transactions with the tribe. 2nd—The increasing misery caused by the iniquitous system of allowing personal and hereditary bondage for debt. 3rd—The unparalleled corruption and extortion of the police in aiding and abetting the mahajuns. 4th—The impossibility of the Sonthals obtaining redress from the Courts. And last, but not least, the improvidence of the Sonthals themselves. These all combined were, in my opinion, the primary causes of the rebellion.'<sup>1</sup> This summary, good as far as it goes, fails to emphasize two factors of great importance.

First of all, the immediate cause of most of the factors mentioned above was the ignorance and the inexperience of the authorities of the day in dealing with primitive tribes. The district known as the Damin-i-koh was formed in the year 1832. It was sparsely populated, and the immigration of Santals from further south, which had been going on for about fifty years, was accelerated and encouraged. At that period, the area was strategically important for the defence of the plains of Bengal; the English had come to India in the first place primarily for trade, and the main purpose behind the policy of settlement would appear to have been the increase of the revenue and encouragement of trade. The Santals, provided with an outlet for their land hunger, were peaceably inclined, and supervision by the Government was reduced to a minimum; flocks of traders penetrated the area to carry away the grains, and they found natural allies in the subordinate police services, who became the real rulers of the tract. 'From Barhait, large quantities of rice, bora, mustard and several other oilseeds, were carried on bullock carts by many Bengali mahajans to Jangipur on the Bhagirathi, from which place these were conveyed... eventually to Calcutta, whence much of the mustard... was exported to England. In return for these grains, the Santals were paid in money, salt, tobacco, or cloth.'<sup>2</sup> It needs but little imagination to see how such an extension of trade would end in the Santals being reduced to serfs, for they were

<sup>1</sup> E. G. Man, *Sonthalia and the Sonthals* (London, 1867), p. 110.

<sup>2</sup> K. K. Datta, *The Santal Insurrection of 1855-57* (Calcutta, 1940), p. 4.

little accustomed to a money economy and started with all the disadvantages of their backwardness. The records, however, contain evidence which leaves nothing to the imagination. High rates of interest, the attachment of land for debt, repayment by personal service, 'even to the third generation,' sheer extortion, and various forms of sharp practice, all these find a place. Many instances have been gathered together recently in the account by J. H. Hutton, found in *Modern India and the West*. The Government was not only geographically remote, but surrounded by an outer fence of Darogas and Thana police, supported by a veritable stockade of *amlahs*, *mukhtears*, *peons* and *barkandazes*. Meanwhile the population, and the revenue, increased in a highly satisfactory manner.

In the second place, economic factors alone will not give an answer to the question, Why did the Santals rebel? Economic oppression has led to the permanent enslavement of millions in many parts of the world. While one should give due weight to the evils accompanying the establishment of British rule, in fairness one must add that the Santals had their chance to rebel because the Government was not fundamentally allied to the other exploiters. They were anxious that the Santals should become peaceful and satisfied peasants in the area, with a firm hold on their land; and in this they were at one with the most powerful motive in Santal life, possession of the land which they till. Land belongs to those by whom the original clearings in the forest were made, and passes through the male line to their descendants—remaining always within the same clan. The Santal village officials received special lands as recognition of their services, and of their office. No motive is so strong in a tribal people as the preservation of the life of the tribe and its *mores*, albeit the motive works for the most part at the unconscious level; and a Santal's land not only provides economic security, but is a powerful link with his ancestors; and this applies to newly entered areas no less than the old, for he will not take possession till the spirits approve. The land is a part of his spiritual as well as his economic heritage. Hunger drove them to despair, but their attachment to the land provided also an emotional basis without which the rebellion might not have taken place.

Hence the conviction that they were impelled by the spirits, and their preparations included elaborate precautions to align themselves with supernatural powers. The leaders were the brothers Sido and Kanhu, whose home was near to Barhait. They evidently issued some kind of ultimatum, though this never seems to have reached the higher authorities for whom it was intended. 'Before the rebellion began, Sido and Kanhu spread it abroad that we should give 8 annas per buffalo plough and 4 annas per bullock plough (annual rent), and if the Government did not accept these terms we should begin to fight; we should kill the unspeakable

Deko, and rule ourselves.'<sup>1</sup> (There is some confusion among the authorities at this point. *The Calcutta Review* of 1856 declares, 'The Santals at first declared that their new God had directed them to collect and pay revenue to the State at the rate of two annas on every buffalo plough, and half an anna on each cow plough per annum.'<sup>2</sup>) The narrative of Chotrae Dasmanjhi throws much light on the preparations of the Santals. 'Before the rebellion began, there came round from Sido and Kanhu to every village in a leaf plate, sun-dried rice, oil and vermilion, with an order that they were to be used for strengthening the spirits, that they might help them to fight. After this another rumour causing a stir was heard, concerning the cleansing of every village street, at the end of it we were to set up a standard, and hang from it a wooden cowbell, a wornout winnowing fan, and an old broom; and this was said—if anyone comes and does not find the street clean, something will happen to that village. Because of this everyone swept absolutely clean the village street and the position before his house. Then another rumour was heard, called *hadun*. (The deep hollow sound of an iron cowbell), when they hung cowbells, to a post, and putting on their dancing ornament, jingle belts, rattle-anklets and ankle bells, they went out to dance in other villages. A week or two after all these orders, the rebellion began in the month of Asar. (This was at the end of June, 1855). They say that Sido and Kanhu obtained a command to worship Suba Thakur and to lead the people; they issued this order, one man from each house come out to fight, we will kill and make an end of all the Deko, rule ourselves, and whoever does not listen, show him a sword, in other words, kill him.'<sup>3</sup>

Chotrae relates how there was a concerted drive against witches in their midst. (Were they the fifth columnists of opposing spiritual powers?) Concerning the purification of a village, if anyone's wife or daughter-in-law was found by the branch planting ordeal to be a witch, those two would order their armed retainers, 'Take her and show her the sword, take her to drink water, her head is too heavy. And the soldiers would take her and put her to death.'<sup>4</sup> He says in another place. 'During the rebellion the Santals did many cruel things. They snatched innocent girls from the protection of their husbands and killed them as witches without cause. When their husbands were unwilling to give them up they were themselves threatened with death. At that the husbands would

<sup>1</sup> *Chotrae Desmanjhi reak' Katha* (published by the Santal Mission of the Northern Churches, 1938), p. 8. The narrative of Chotrae, available only in Santali, covers the period of the rebellion, in which he was a participant at the age of about 14 or 15. It is to be hoped that an English translation of this, the only autobiography of a Santal hitherto published, may some day be made available.

<sup>2</sup> K. K. Datta, *op. cit.*, p. 10.

<sup>3</sup> *Chotrae Desmanjhi reak' Katha*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 10.

throw themselves on their mercy and say 'What can I do? She will not leave me, do what you like.' Then the cruel men forcibly snatched away the girls from the tight embrace of those who were trying to save them, and if they did not loosen their hold, they pounded them and stabbed wildly to overcome them—then dragged them away and killed them.<sup>1</sup> Sido and Kanhu received their commands and inspiration from Suba Thakur. (*The Calcutta Review* of 1856 contains a circumstantial but unlikely detailed account of the revelation). This fever spread and the spirit took possession of others as the rebellion grew. 'When it became known that Sido and Kanhu had gone to loot Mohèspur, two Suba Thakurs were born in Nankar also, one was Mani Pargana of Jambro, and the other Ram Pargana of Baromasia. These gathered the hosts of this part and set out to loot Maranpur.'<sup>2</sup> 'Three or four days later Sam Suba of Kulaibari arose'<sup>3</sup>. That they were 'possessed' by the spirit in the usual and recognised manner is indicated in the account of an incident at the loot of Naranpur. 'Suba Thakur gave an order, "Break down the door"; there were many large stones near the door of the wall round the house, and they began to break it by throwing stones. And Sam Suba becoming possessed (*rum*) and drawing a sword, ran right round the building. One of the soldiers felled Suba Thakur with a shot from a window at the top of the building; when he died all of us ran stumbling for our lives in all directions.'<sup>4</sup> The command of their leader was the command of a Thakur, and when he was killed they lost heart and fled.

Sido and Kanhu in palkis,  
Chand and Bhaero on horses;  
O brother Chand, O boy Bhaero,  
Bhaero on the horse looks dejected. (Lagre song.)

On this side Santbhui, on that side Sikarbhui, Babu Nilu Singh,  
O Babu Nadu Singh, Jadu Jamadar;  
We will not allow you to pass through Sikarbhui, Babu Nilu Singh,  
O Babu Nadu Singh, Jadu Jamadar. (Lagre Song).<sup>5</sup>

The rebellion followed a pattern one might expect when illarmed rioters on the one side were faced by armed troops. The Santals gathered, sometimes in companies of several thousand, and proceeded to plunder the nearby accessible bazaars; undeterred at first by their own danger, they murdered police officers and money lenders, and also other hapless people who fell across their path. They looted the possessions of the Deko, seeking out their oppressors.

<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, p. 18. <sup>2</sup> *ibid.*, p. 10. <sup>3</sup> *ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> *Chotræ Desmanjhi reak' Katha*, p. 12.

<sup>5</sup> The three songs translated in the text were collected by Babu Ernest Soren, in the Bankura District. Thus, nearly a century after the occurrence, the *hul* is remembered in an area far from where the disturbance took place.

Not until an alarmed Government dispatched troops to the area and proclaimed martial law did lawlessness abate. Several encounters between troops and hordes of Santals took place in the month of July, as a result of which the Santals were broken into small groups, and many returned to their homes. Armed as they were with bows and arrows, and battle-axes, their rising achieved one important objective, for they drew the attention of the authorities to the wrongs under which they were suffering.

The course of the disturbances is of little importance in itself. The cost to the Santals was enormous, and could not be better described than in the words of Chotrae. 'In this way, through the cruelty and enticement of Sido and Kanhu, we Santals came on sorrow and misfortune through the rebellion; many died, many were widowed, many children were orphaned, instead of a blessing a great curse fell upon us. And from after the rebellion we Santals began to scatter because of our hunger. For hunger, we Santals who set out to rule ourselves, attached ourselves by hundreds to the Deko for our living. Many returned to Sikar as day labourers, and for the most part people went to Bengal to work for Dekos as day labourers; in the same way men went also to the towns. Driven by hunger we spread across the Ganges up to the Pandua forest, Sikarpur, Catai and Barin, and there we engaged in trade, selling coal and wood and leaves. Some did not return to their own place until by their labour they had collected one or two head of cattle. The villages did not become populous till four or five years after the rising. The Sahibs caught Sido and Kanhu, and because they had killed many, and made many widows and orphans, caused much destitution and weeping, they were tried and condemned and punished, that is they were hung from a *mahua* tree on Jhilimili plain and done to death. Bhogna of Pindra, they say, he caused the death of many; and for that they cut him in small pieces, tortured and killed him; they were rewarded according to their deeds.'<sup>1</sup> The measures taken by the authorities to suppress the rebellion show a combination of severity and attempts at conciliation not unusual in cases of the kind. In many instances villages were burnt to the ground, a step which was not approved by higher authority. Kanhu was captured in February, 1856.

Some good undoubtedly came out of the suffering. The formation of the non-regulation district known as the Santal Parganas was a great gain. The most serious inroads on the tribal solidarity of the Santals were checked; subsequent legislation and other measures for the economic and social welfare of the Santals probably owe not a little to the fact that the name 'Santal' appears on the map of India. In the Santal Parganas, some attempt

<sup>1</sup> *Chotrae Desmanjhi reah Katha*, pp. 19-20. The Editor, P. O. Bodding, points out that Sido was killed in an engagement with troops.

was made to recognise and utilise the village organisation of the Santals in administering the area, and thirty years later restrictions were placed on the alienation of Santal lands. It is a blot on the administration that these measures were confined to the area of the Santal Parganas, where alone the Santals were sufficiently numerous to make serious trouble. Public safety was assured, but much more might have been done to save the Santals if their grievances had been attended to wherever they were found in considerable numbers. No action was taken outside the Santal Parganas until the second decade of the twentieth century, when McAlpin's report formed the basis of legislation against alienation of land for debt in Bengal. By the time he made his enquiry, he reported that the village organisation of the Santals was too far gone in decay to be resuscitated, and the belated Act called a halt to the process of losing land when most of it was lost. The following extract from Sir George Yule's 'Report on the Santal Parganas' for 1858 shows that the problem of the Santal in other districts soon showed its head. After relating how certain Santals from Monghyr District had been to him, he said. 'We explained to the deputation with much repetition that we in the Santal districts could not help them; that they lived under another system, and must be guided by the rules of that system.'<sup>1</sup> The Santal Parganas, however, remains on the map, and Santals everywhere regard it as the country of their people.

W. J. CULSHAW

## II

The account by W. J. Culshaw is the first attempt for some decades to review the Santal rebellion from a new angle and to avail of the important evidence of *Chotrae Deshmanjhi reak' Katha*. In this note I shall only add a few comments and reproduce some extra material.

Among Indian rebellions, the revolt of the Santals is unique in having inspired an English novel. *Harma's Village* by R. Carstairs vividly reconstructs its wild course and there is probably no better and certainly no more sympathetic introduction to the Santal of that period. The novel has since been translated into Santali by Reuben Kisku Rapaz and after running serially in the Santali newspaper, *Pera Hor*, is now about to appear in book form. As a serial it has been avidly read by hundreds of Santals all over Eastern India. It has reached Santal soldiers at the various fronts and its popularity testifies to the extraordinary hold which the Hul still has on the Santal mind.

The following excerpt, which gives an idea of its quality, concerns the memorable scene in which a subinspector and money-lender were confronted by Sidu and Kanhu. The subinspector had arrested certain Santals and was on his way to Bhagalpur.

<sup>1</sup> Quoted in an appendix to E. G. Man, *Sonthalia and the Sonthals*.

'A white mist covered the River and its banks when the Daroga and his company reached Pachkattia. Day had dawned, but the sun was not yet visible. All at once, like shadows in the mist, the more shadow-like because of the silence,—they saw standing in the way they were to go a multitude—all men; all Sonthals; all armed. The Daroga halted. The prisoners, who had been walking with their eyes fixed sullenly on the ground, looked up and saw the dense crowd before them. Neither they nor the Daroga thought of its having anything to do with them.

To all appearance it was a peaceful assembly. But what meant those lines of faces together and all looking one way; the grim, fierce eyes, looking out from beneath nodding plumes of shaggy hair; and the axe, bow, sword or club grasped in every hand?

Kenaram flinched, but not the Daroga. Strong in the prestige of "Sirkar," whom he served, and accustomed to throw himself alone or with one or two men into a seething mob of rioters, he rode steadily, Kenaram at his elbow, and his followers with the prisoners pressing close behind—rode steadily into the midst of the Santals, purposing to pass through them. In unbroken silence their ranks opened, and a narrow lane wide enough to admit four men abreast was made. Into this lane, lined on either side with men facing inwards, the Daroga rode, glancing haughtily to the right and left among the scowling faces as if in search of a leader worthy to answer his questions.

Opposite the embankment further progress was barred by a dense mass of men drawn up across the way. He stopped, Kenaram with him, and, perforce, his followers behind him. In the rear, in front and on his right the crowd closed in as a quick sand closes round a ship that has touched a shoal. Only on his left the slope of the embankment from where he stood up to the foot of the Peepul tree remained clear. The deep silence was hardly broken by the champing of the two ponies on their bits. Through the silence and the mist there cut the stern, harsh voice of the Daroga asking what this meant.

Fierce and sharp, sounding very loud in the silence, a voice pealed forth from above:—"Be more respectful in the Presence, dog! Make a reverence to their Highnesses!"

The Daroga, taken aback, looked up and saw standing at the foot of the Peepul tree two young men—the Brothers—surrounded by their armed guard. It was one of this body who had stepped from his place in the ranks, and addressed the Daroga in language he had often used to others, but which no man had ever before used to him. The Daroga felt that he was in a strange atmosphere, but that boldness was his best chance.

"What is this, young men," he said, in a tone of reproof; "and who be ye? Know ye the penalty for insulting an officer of Sirkar on duty?"

"What means this that I see free Hor being led captive within my country, without my leave?" cried Kanoo in a loud voice. "Cut their bonds!" "Beware, touch them not!" thundered the Daroga. Then, turning to the Brothers, and putting on his fiercest professional scowl, he angrily asked:—"Who be ye, who take on you to meddle with Sirkar's business?"

"I am Kanoo," said one, "and this is my country!"

"I am Sidoo," said the other, "and this is my country!"

"They be the men of the Wheel, to whom the goddess has given the country," cried a man of the guard.

"Hey! The men of the Wheel!—Kanoo and Sidoo, Hoy!" cried another. Round the vast throng rolled a deep growl, like thunder.

"Cut the bonds!" roared Kanoo; and as he spake the four prisoners were forced out of the hands of their guard. The voice of the multitude, as it saw this, rose deeper and stronger.

The frightened Kenaram, and the Daroga, enraged but impotent, were made to dismount. Their umbrellas were taken from them, their ponies were led away, and they themselves, grinding their teeth with unconcealed rage, were made to do humble obeisance to the Brothers. Then they were granted permission to leave the Presence.

But arrogance was ingrained in the Daroga's nature. Not content with escaping alive, he must still demand his prisoners, and threaten the people with the dire consequences of defying Sirkar.

Kanoo had gone to sleep last night a dreamer of dreams: he was suddenly become a ruler of men; and thought it no strange thing that he, a humble and unknown Hor, should be bandying words with the redoubtable Daroga. Without heat, or show of temper, he replied to the indignant officer:—"Be content and pass on. These be our men. Ye have now no more power over the Hor than over the Paharias. We are their lords, and will judge them. Hast thou aught against them? Then prove it to our satisfaction."

"I will prove it before the Courts of Sirkar," said the Daroga angrily, "and before none other! Never was heard such presumption! I call you to witness" (turning to the horror-stricken Kenaram and their followers) "that I have been forcibly deprived of my lawful prisoners; and I warn you, Kanoo and Sidoo, who say the country is yours, that this is rebellion, for which ye will hang! Be wise: give me back my prisoners!"

"We have said!" was Kanoo's only reply.

"I go to the Hakim then," said the Daroga firmly. "Make way there!" and the people began to make way, so great was the prestige of Sirkar, and of Sirkar's officer, the Daroga.

"Give us our horses!" said the Daroga haughtily.

"Wait until ye are out of sight," said one of the bodyguard. "No man mounts horse in the Presence!"



"Think on Heen's spear, Kaneramji!" cried a voice from the crowd. At this sally there was a general roar, for the tale of the usurer's overthrow in the Jungipore bazaar had flown all over the country. Sweeter music than this laughter Kenaram had never heard. Every successive defiance uttered by the Daroga had added to his terror. The people laughed—he might yet get out of this alive!

The Daroga's arrogance would not allow him to go without a last word. In vain Kenaram plucked eagerly at his arm. Turning to the Brothers, he cried aloud:—"I know those who have insulted Sirkar by rescuing my prisoners; and them I will bind even as my prisoners were bound!"

"Thou wilt want a cartload of ropes," cried one; "for ye will have to tie us all up!"

The Daroga turned and stalked haughtily after Kenaram who, in a fever to be off, was urging him to quicken his pace; but this pride forbade him to do.

Meantime, one by one, the captives had been released. The last to be released was Gorbhoo.

Now Gorbhoo's hatred of Kenaram, the man who had entrapped him, deserted him, and seen unmoved the sufferings of the last few days, had grown and grown until it filled his whole soul. At the sight of his tyrant walking off quietly with the Daroga, it blazed into an uncontrollable frenzy. Snatching a battle-axe from one of the crowd, the giant Manjhi uttered a wild scream of "HOOL! HOOL!", rushed on the usurer, and with a smashing blow felled him to the ground. Blow upon blow he struck on Kenaram's senseless body, showering invectives on the dead man as the cause of all his misfortunes. The crowd, at first alarmed, then astonished, quickly caught his frenzy, and joined in his cry of "Hool! Hool!" until the whole air was full of it; while the men nearest to the body added their useless blows to those of Gorbhoo.

Suddenly Gorbhoo, splashed with Kenaram's blood, turned to where stood the Daroga cowed at last, livid with fright, trembling, willing to flee had a way been open: but the crowd had closed him in.

"Kill the Daroga!" shrieked Gorbhoo, and leapt at him with the terrible axe.

In vain the Daroga tried to take shelter among the crowd. The crowd was impenetrable, and threw him off. For a few moments he delayed his fate by catching Gorbhoo's upraised arm, though no match for the Sonthal giant, he was a powerful man. But another axe did the work, and he sank to the ground beside Kenaram.

The Daroga's burkundazes and Kenaram's men, all but a few who, seeing what was to come, had disappeared in time, were next attacked. Sick with horror, Harma saw them struck down one

after another. The raging, howling mob of Sonthals, mad with the lust of slaughter, when they had no more living victims, hacked and mutilated the bodies of those they had already destroyed. Were these the good-natured, merry folk he had seen only a few minutes before; and was this what the Hool turned men into? He shuddered at the thought of the terrible times coming.

Kanoo and Sidoo had no misgivings. It was the SIGN. Their time of waiting was over. The great day had come!

When the rage of the people had been spent; when the mob at length left the shapeless pulp that had once been Kenaram, the Daroga and their men, and stood about spattered with blood, their eyes red with murder, the minds of the Brothers were made up. Kanoo cried with a loud voice:—"The Hool has begun! Send round the Sal branch! There is no Daroga, no Hakim, no Sirkar! The RAJ of the HOR is come!"

And the people, brandishing their bloody weapons, shouted "HOOL! HOOL!—No more Daroga—No more badgemen—no more usurers! Hail, Kanoo and Sidoo, Men of the Wheel, lords of the Hor!"<sup>1</sup>

The official account of the Rebellion is given in McPherson's *Settlement Report*, and as this is not easily available it will perhaps be of interest if I reproduce it here.

'The progress of the peaceful development of the district was rudely but only temporarily interrupted by the Santal rebellion which broke out in the Damin-i-koh on the last day of June 1855. The outbreak was quite unexpected and by none more so than by Mr Pontet, as his letters of that year disclose. A certain amount of unrest had been noticed in the cold weather of 1854-55 and Mr Pontet in his annual report of 28 May 1855 discussed the relations of the Santals with their Mahajans, the extortionate interest of 50 per cent charged by the latter and also certain complaints against the railway people, who were making the new Loop line from Burdwan to Rajmahal; but so far as revenue demands were concerned there was perfect contentment, and it never crossed Mr Pontet's mind that the other grievances of the Santals would lead to open revolt. It was exactly one month after this letter was written that 10,000 Santals gathered together at Bhagnadih in the heart of the Barheit valley under the leadership of the four brothers Siddhu, Kanhu, Chand and Bhairab and proclaimed war against mahajans, zamindars and all rich Bengalis. On the 7 July the daroga of thana Dighi attempted treacherously to arrest the leaders of the revolt and was himself killed with nine of his escort. Mr Pontet had attempted to use his influence with the Sonthals within the Damin, but found his efforts in vain and reported in July that he could 'never again consider himself safe without firearms.' There were no troops at hand to contend

<sup>1</sup> R. Carstairs, *Harma's Village* (Pokhuria, 1935), pp. 251-6.

with the insurgents except the Hill Rangers stationed at Bhagalpur. These advanced to Colgong, but on 16 July were defeated by the Sonthals at Piolapur with the loss of their sergeant-major and 25 men. The rebels then got out of hand and committed numerous acts of atrocity, butchering many of the mahajans who had held them for so many years in a state of bondage.

But the Hill Rangers were speedily reinforced by European troops and native infantry and by the end of August they had cleared the country on the Bhagalpur side of Santal insurgents, inflicting a serious defeat upon them at Sangrampur. East of the hills Rajmahal was saved by the exertions of Mr Vigors, Railway Engineer, who fortified his residence there. On the Murshidabad side Mr Toogood, Magistrate of the district, brought up troops from Berhampore and inflicted signal defeats on the Sonthals at Maheshpur and again at Raghunathpur on 24 July. Further operations against the rebels were postponed on account of the rains. There were still about 30,000 of them under arms, and they began to display renewed activity, especially on the Birbhum side. Martial law, at first refused by the Government of India, was proclaimed on 10th November over Bhagalpur right of the Ganges, Murshidabad right of the Bhagirathi and the whole Birbhum district. The disturbed country was then swept by some 8,000 troops under the command of Major-General Lloyd and Brigadier General Bird and by the last day of the year the rebellion was officially declared to be at an end. Martial law was suspended on 3 January 1856. The work of revenue collection within the Damin-i-koh had been resumed before that date. The Dumka Damin remained longest disturbed. In Rajmahal and Pakaur Mr Pontet reported in January that more than one-fourth of the raiyats had already settled down again, and he expected to realise one-half of the past year's revenue. In the Godda Damin, which was first pacified, he expected three-fourths. By the following year, collections were again in full swing. The truth was that the causes of the disturbance were not agrarian. The Sonthals were excluded from the working of Regulation I of 1827 and exposed to the rapacity of police and civil court underlings of Bhagalpur, working hand and glove with extortionate mahajans and, outside the Damin-i-koh, oppressive zamindars. Mr Pontet had no police or magisterial powers and could not do much to protect them. When he attempted to interfere, he was snubbed. Although the officially ascertained causes of the rebellion were the grievances above related, it is now generally recognised that a deeper, or at any rate, a supervening cause was the Sonthal yearning for independence, a dream of the ancient days when they had no overlords, perhaps a memory of the pre-historic times when according to some speculators they were themselves masters of the Gangetic valley and had not yet been driven back by the Aryan invaders. Be that as it

may, there has been observed at various times a peculiar movement amongst the Sonthals to which the name 'Kherwarism' has been given. 'Kherwar,' according to the Rev Mr Skrefsrud, 'is the ancient tribal name of the Sonthals, and in their minds is inseparably associated with the golden era of their history, namely, the time when they lived in Champa in absolute independence and had no rent or tribute to pay, but only to bring a small annual offering to their leaders in virtue of their office.' Ordinarily Sonthals are quiet and contented, but when any grievance rankles in their minds, the spirit of unrest arises and their leaders or self-interested agitators appeal to the ancient traditions of the race and the hope of independence. On this subject Mr Oldham writes, 'It (the yearning for independence) is not the popularly received cause of the insurrection of 1855; but after reading all the correspondence connected with the introduction of the Santals into the Damin-i-koh, and its administration by Mr Pontet, till the rising, the large part which this idea and hope played in that outbreak becomes plain to my mind. The movement so originated drew to it all those whose patriotism was stimulated by the recollection of their suffering at the hands of the usurers and the police; but the fundamental idea at work and that which was attempted to be put in practice was the establishment of a Santal realm and kingdom.'<sup>1</sup>

There is also a short account of the rebellion in *Horkoren Mare Hapramko reak' Katha*. This remarkable book was dictated by a Santal guru, Kolean Haram, to a missionary, L. O. Skrefsrud in 1871. Kolean Haram died before he could complete the account and a *cela*, Jugia Haram, dictated the section which deals with the rebellion. The following is Jugia Haram's version.

'Owing to the trouble caused by the Dekos and the pangs of hunger and after crossing the Ajai river we gradually spread towards the north and east, to the hills and the banks of the Ganges. At that time there was only forest with Bhuiyas here and there, and on the hills, Mar Mundas. These Mundas are also called Sauria. At that time the Bhuiyas and Mar Mundas were kings. They gave out land by agreement and took very little rent. Under them we had no trouble. But day by day the Dekos entered for trade and at last settled as money lenders. They became the king's money lenders also. Having taken money and clothes from the money lenders, the kings pledged their lands with them. In that way the Deko money lenders acquired the whole land by fraud, and became kings themselves while the real kings grew poor like us. The Deko kings who were living near the hills encroached on the lands of the Mar.

We cleared the hills and forests for these new kings by taking loans from the money lenders and in return these kings levied

<sup>1</sup> H. McPherson, *Final Report on the Survey and Settlement Operations in the District of Santal Parganas, 1898-1907* (Calcutta, 1909), pp. 37-8.

rent from us. The money lenders give us little and take a great deal. They take the year's crop and we have then to take fresh loans from them. However much we pay they are never satisfied. If they are not satisfied with the year's crop they drive away our cattle. If the debt is not repaid even then, we work at their houses with our women and children for one or two *pais* of rice. As there were no officers, to whom could we cry? Then came Deko police. But they were won over by the white money of their own caste men and dismissed our cases. We had great trouble and they harassed the whole country.

Then great rumours arose. At first it was said that the *Lag Lagin* snakes were moving around and swallowing men. To remove this evil the people of five villages met together and after fasting, went in the night to another group of five villages. Men of five villages, one from each house, came to our village. They beat drums at the outer door of the Manjhi's house and danced round it. They hung wooden bells round their waists and the swaying of their bodies made the bells give out a great sound. Two unmarried boys put on the sacred thread and carried round in a basket two small ploughs made of *nim* and *bel* wood and marked with vermilion. After doing a round of five villages, they assembled the villagers in an open place at the last village. There in the name of the *Lag Lagin* snakes they offered *bel* leaves, *arwa* rice, oil and vermilion. After that, they taught each village the catch song and putting the sacred thread on two of our unmarried boys gave them the ploughs and returned to their houses. We then joined four other villages and went round five villages in the same way. After doing a round of five villages, we entrusted the two ploughs to the villagers of the five villages and put the sacred thread on two of their unmarried boys. We worshipped in the name of the *Lag Lagin* snakes and having taught them the song returned home. When we returned the men cleaned the courtyards and the cowsheds and brought a pot full of water. As long as their men were away in the night, our wives did not put their feet to the ground but kept cowering by their cots, put their feet upon it and suckled their children.

After this they spread another rumour. Those women who had an equal number of children swore eternal friendship and exchanged flowers in groups of two. They exchanged clothes and ate and drank together. Why, no one knows. Perhaps it was to keep a solid front and be all related so that when the rebellion began no one would speak behind another's back and whatever happened would be kept secret.

Yet another rumour grew. People said, 'a buffalo cow is moving in the country. Wherever it finds grass at someone's outer door, it halts and grazes and until all the members of that household have died it does not move away.' Therefore throughout the land they dug up all the grass in the village streets.

There was also a rumour about Doms. In the Ganges, a Dom touched a golden boat and it sank. Because of that all Doms would be hacked down and killed. For that reason out of fear the Doms began to move like stags in a forest. They dressed like Santals and lived in Santal houses.

Then a rumour spread that in Layo Gar a leader had been born to an unmarried girl and every one should go and hunt there. Layo Gar is beyond Hazaribagh. Some people went, saw the leader and hunted with him in the Kanchan forest. All the deer they killed they collected at one place and cut in pieces. Each man brought a leaf for taking back his share. They counted the leaves and saw how many thousands had assembled. The leader paid all the expenses. When they parted the leader said, "We shall hunt in the Tiur forest near Deoghar. Gather there." But for some reason they did not do so.

Then another rumour arose. 'People are coming to kill the Dekos. Hang up at the end of the village street, a bullock skin and a flute, so that they will know that you are Santals. Otherwise they will kill all of you.' So fearing this would happen we hung up these things in every village.

Then it was heard that in the Par country in Bhognadi a Suba Thakur had arisen. Hearing this, people began to set off, each with a *pai* measure of *arwa* rice and the milk of a cow. There they saw an altar and round it a railing. In the middle the Thakur was sitting in the guise of Sido of that village. They saluted him and did homage, falling at his feet and placing all the rice and milk before him. Then the Hakim's Daroga came. He said, 'Where is your permission? Show me your authority.' Then Sido said 'This is my authority' and he killed the Daroga with his knife.

After that, the rebellion began. They heard that the Daroga had been killed and constables came. At Keopara they fought with Sido and his brother Kanhu and the Santals of the country. The constables were defeated. This elated Sido and Kanhu and their followers. Sido and Kanhu ordered, 'Kill all the kings and mahajans, and chase the other Dekos beyond the Ganges. We shall have our own rule.' The Santals of the country began to thirst for blood and many Suba Thakurs arose.

Then battles took place in Pakaur and Maheshpur. There also the police constables were defeated. Then the Jamolpani Mani Pargana and Ram Manjhi of Baromasia became the Subas in Nankar. They and the Santals ravaged the country side and looted Naranpur and Molhoti. Then Binod Manjhi of Belparta Tilaboni became a Suba. He with other Santals looted Deoca and Gunpura. At Gunpura the Santals were defeated. Then they fought at the Nangolia thana. There the Santals were killed in great numbers. Then beyond the Mor river at Laubaria they fought. There a host of police constables were killed and also an Englishman. And the Santals were shot down in heaps. The

Santals did not win. They went to the Suptola forest and the Satbehor hill and took refuge. They remained there for two months in Asin and Katik. Then Santals killed Santals from hunger. Englishmen surrounded us and drove us to Sikarpur and Ramkhari.

Whichever Santals of us who were arrested were taken to Dhasnia. After keeping us there a month they brought us to Kumrabad near the Maurakhi river. There the Englishmen coaxed us. They said 'Why need you suffer? Tell us the leaders and we will let you go at once.' Then the people told them. The English caught the leaders. Some they hanged on the spot, and some they transported for life. Some of them they released. Sido had died in battle and Kanhu and others were caught later on. They hanged Kanhu and one or two others and many were transported. Ram Manjhi and Binode slipped away. As for us, the Governor came and settled the matter and we returned to our village.

During the rebellion we suffered much. From Asar for three months we were in the forests under the trees. It poured with rain. We almost died of hunger, all because of the false words of those Suba Thakur cheats. In the rebellion many of us lost our cattle, and when we went back to the village we were in great trouble. There were no plough cattle. There was nothing to eat, and the Dekos laughed at us and once again the money lenders got us in their hands.'

This version is supplemented in many details by the account of Chotrae Desmanjhi whose memories of the revolt are the only other Santal record of the day. Certain excerpts from this story are given by W. J. Culshaw but the account is of such importance as a whole that I am giving a full translation of it. The translation is by Stephen Hari Tudu in collaboration with Mildred Archer.

Chotrae Deshmanjhi's account is as follows: 'The Santal rebellion occurred when we were still at Benagadia. At that time I was a growing lad of fourteen or fifteen. Before the rebellion Sido and Kanhu had preached that we should only pay eight annas for a buffalo plough and four annas for a bullock plough and if the rulers did not agree we should start fighting. We would slay all the unspeakable Dekos and would become the rulers ourselves.

Before the rebellion started, oil and vermilion in leaf cups were sent by Sido and Kanhu and taken round from village to village to placate the bongas so that they might help in the fight.

After that there was a rumour that in every village, the streets should be cleared and metal bells, wooden bells, broken winnowing fans and old worn out brooms with a flag should be hung up at the end and it was said that someone would be coming and

that something dreadful would happen to the village if the streets were not found clean.

So out of fear, the people weeded their village streets and cleaned the entrances of their houses.

After that there was another movement called *hadun* when the people of one village went dancing to another with buttock and anklet bells. After a week or two when all these were over, the rebellion started in the month of Ashar.

People said that Sido and Kanhu had been commanded to act as Suba Thakurs and to lead the people of the land and an order came 'come out, a man from each house, and go and fight. We will slay all the Dekos and we will be rulers; if any one does not listen to this word, show him 'the pod of a pea,' that is, slay him with a sword.'

After that it was rumoured that Sido and Kanhu had raised an army and had gone to loot Maheshpur. They went in palkis and as they went they cleaned the country up. Wherever they camped, they made the boys and girls of the village dance and if a girl caught their fancy, their orderlies would place a cloth on the girl's head and say she had become the Thakur's. The girl was then put on a palki and taken to them. If they saw and liked a girl at a dance, a cloth was also put on her head and it was said that she also had become the Thakur's. Then she too would be put on a palki and taken to them. In this way both Sido and Kanhu got numbers of girls. Anyone's daughter or daughter-in-law became theirs if their eyes fell on her and their clothes were put on the girl's head. If a man said anything he was shown 'the pod of a pea,' that is to say, their orderlies slew him. So from fear not a word was said.

In cleaning up the villages, if any man's wife, daughter or daughter-in-law was found guilty of witch-craft by the ordeal of *dali dharwak* they said to their orderlies, 'Take and show her 'the pod of a pea,' take her to drink water, her head is too heavy.' Then the orderlies took and slew her.

When we heard that Sido and Kanhu had gone to loot Maheshpur, there arose two Suba Thakurs in Nankar also—Mani Pargana of Jambro and Ram Pargana of Baromasia. They also raised an army and went to loot Narainpur. We camped in the open field where Muston Sahib had his indigo godown and that night we beat our drums and blew our horns till morning. The noise filled the Dekos with terror and they fled at night in all directions. To save their lives, they left all their houses, cattle and property and hid in the forests.

Next morning we entered the bazaar at dawn, beating our drums and blowing our horns. We found no one except one old man and one old woman. They besought us to spare their lives, but the mob did not listen and some hasty men put them to death. Then we started to loot and everyone took anything he



could. When we had looted to our hearts content we returned to camp.

Then the two Suba Thakurs arranged for us to go on the third day and loot the bazaar at Gunpura. After this was settled, we returned to our houses in the evening and the two leaders stayed at Baromasia. On the fixed day we went to loot Gunpura. There also all the Dekos had heard the *dubu dubu* sounds of the drums and the *tutu tutu* sound of the horns and had fled in fear. There also we looted without check, and after ransacking the bazaar we returned to our homes and the two Subas went to theirs.

Three or four days later there arose Sham Suba of Kulaibari who fixed a day for us to hunt at Narainpur. But soldiers had come to Narainpur before we went there and were waiting on the top of the pucca house of Bodhan Deko. We did not know that till we got there.

On the due day Sham Suba came with a great crowd to our neighbourhood. We went and joined them and then went on to Narainpur for the hunt, beating our drums and blowing the horns. We started looting and reached the pucca house of Bodhan Deko. The house was surrounded with a wall and all the doors were closed. Sham Suba had the drums beaten as a signal to the crowd to come together and burst the doors open and loot. The crowd heard the drums and gathered at the building. Near the building was a tank and a Deko had gone out into deep water to save his life and covered his head with weeds so that the people might not see him. But he was seen by someone who called out 'There is a pig rolling in the water.' Then they shot wildly at him with arrows and killed him. Then the Suba Thakur said, 'Beat on the door with heavy stones and break it open.' Some big stones were lying by the door in the wall. The people began to break open the door by throwing the stones at it. At that moment Sham Suba became 'possessed' and began rushing round the wall, brandishing a naked sword. Then a soldier shot Sham Suba down with his gun from a hole in a window of the building. As soon as he fell we all fled for our lives stumbling and falling over ourselves from fear. Seeing us running away, the soldiers came out and climbed on the top of the roof and shot at us at random. We escaped to our various houses and gave up looting for good.

After two or three days many soldiers came. They looted and set fire to villages. When people heard this, there was panic and they ran here and there to save their lives; we left our houses, property and cattle and rushed to the forests. We filled the Salbona mountain and hid in the lairs of tigers. From fear of the soldiers, we lost our fear of tigers and bears. Some people took

<sup>1</sup> L. O. Skrefsrud, Kolean Haram and Jugia Haram, *Horkoren Mare Hapram ko reak Katha* (Benagaria, Third Edition, 1928), pp. 250-55.

with them as much food and cattle and as many bullocks and buffaloes as they could.

We hid there for a whole day and when night came, we started off. During the night we crossed the hill and came to Saroibindha. There we made a camp and halted. We were a very big crowd. We halted there for two days. There was one disturbance when they killed some witches. They killed five or six women.

At this we got very frightened. What had happened to us? What danger faced us? My two elder brothers said 'We have many girls. They may call them witches and kill them. We must flee from here at once.'

So the same night we set off with Narain Manjhi. We went day and night over hills and through forests until we halted at Kodma. While we were halting there, Sido and Kanhu camped with an army at Mohalpahari and held a *chata* festival.

During the two weeks we were there, there was another commotion about *saiha* marriage; that we should not allow a single girl to remain unmarried.

Instead of vermilion they used oil to do *iputut* to girls, and *iputut* with oil was taken as a *saiha* marriage. No matter whether they lived together or not after marriage, no one asked questions nor did they enquire about each other. The only point was that during the rebellion not a single girl was to remain unmarried.

Two of my elder sisters were married in *saiha* form while we were there. What could you do? If you did not listen and obey, the people of the country killed you. We had to obey from fear. When we saw all this, we were very worried, so we left Narain Manjhi and the others behind. We went on towards the south west halting at several places on the way. We went on and reached Ramkhuri in the Saptola hills. There we found large crowds of people with their children and cattle camping inside the forest. Seeing them we felt greatly cheered and also halted there.

Within a week of our arrival, the soldiers came. They came on horse back and on elephants. When they came, they first went up the hill to look for people. Some one shot a soldier from his horse and at this their captain sounded his bugle. The soldiers started firing wildly at any one they saw and they began to knock them down like mushrooms. When we found that they had reached Ramkhuri and the place where we were halting, twelve manjhis came out with water in lotas and cloths round their necks and met them. The captain again sounded his bugle and the soldiers ceased firing.

Then they collected all of us and the captain said, 'Why are you doing this killing?' We said, 'We are not killing any one, we have run away to save our lives.' The captain said, 'Just now you have shot one of my soldiers with an arrow.' The manjhis joined their hands and said 'No, it is not us. Those are men who have halted in the hills further back, none of us have killed any one.'

After that the captain said, 'All you men including the boys come to one side. We will kill you all. It is you that are fighting.' Then we replied, 'If you will kill us, who will look after our girls and women?' The captain then said, 'That is our look out. We will look after them.' Then having nothing to say we gave ourselves up. We said, 'Then do with us as you like.'

Then the captain said, 'Bring out your arms.' So we brought out all our bows and arrows, battle axes, swords, spears and dumped them all together and then they made us take them to their camp. The soldiers had camped at Kukurtopa. After that the captain ordered the soldiers to loot us and they took everything we had. Some of us had taken our cows and buffaloes along with us. They took those away also. They left us helpless.

Then the captain said, 'Where will you go!?' We said, 'We will live on leaves and go to Sikar.' Then the captain told us, 'If any of you go on, we will kill you, but we will not kill you if you return to your homes.' We then said, 'We will return' and after that, the soldiers left us.

A day or two later we began flocking back. We halted here and there and begged our food. Then we reached Hasapathor in the evening. The whole village was burnt to ashes, but a few cowsheds remained. We stayed in a broken cowshed. One or two other families had come there before us. We had nothing to eat. Then our old mother went to them that night to beg from them, but alas they also said, 'We have nothing, mother. We also are new here and have nothing.' We were dismayed. Then I remembered the *bel* tree which stands by the boys' hostel that had been looked after by me and had grown under my care. We went in the night and gathered the *bel* fruits and brought them with us. Then we boiled and ate them and then only did we have relief. Hunger is a terrible thing. It is worse than illness in the body; and that also we have known.

Next day we went to Benagadia. When we arrived there we saw that this village also they had burnt to ashes. We were overwhelmed with grief. Where were we to live? We found Narain Manjhi and his people and one or two other families at the place where Narain tola now stands. They had come ahead of us and put up some huts five or six days before. Narain Manjhi said to us, 'We have no buffalo or bullock so how can we drag out wood? We cannot make our houses in our own villages but here the forest is close so we can carry the wood here on our heads and shoulders. We can also take out wood to a place close by with ropes.' Because of this we put our houses up at that place too and ever since that village has been there. After that Narain became the *manjhi* and Matru became *pargana*.

In this way we Santals were reduced to great sorrow, misery, suffering and scarcity as a result of the wicked acts as well as deceitful promises of getting rule from Sido and Kanhu. We lost

our houses, cattle cows, bullocks and buffaloes, our food and everything. Only our hands were left.

Again through the mad plans of Sido and Kanhu many people lost their lives. The worst time was at Nangolia where many people were killed in the fight with the soldiers. There a huge crowd of Santals had gathered to fight and beat the soldiers. At first the soldiers fired blank shots just to frighten them. On this, the simple minded Santals, not understanding, boasted that their guns were not working and that all their bullets were being blown away like air. They said that their *bonga* was superior and more powerful and so they gradually went closer and closer.

Then some stupid person amongst the people shot a soldier with an arrow. When they saw this the soldiers began to fire at them wildly like the bursting of fried maize. The people fell down, one on top of each other and were stuck together with blood, and over the whole field there was blood running. Some people then jumped into the flooded More river and from fear of being shot to death were drowned, and some were carried away by the current. In this way numbers lost their lives and countless people died.

Besides that during the rebellion the Santals did some very cruel acts. They snatched many lovely girls from their husband's arms, accused them without reason of being witches and killed them. When they would not leave their husbands, they would say to the husbands, 'Let her go, we will show you also the 'pod of the pea'. The husband begged and begged them, 'What can I do? She will not leave me. Do what you like to me.' Then the cruel men dragged away the girls who clung to their husbands hoping they would save them. When they would not leave their husbands, they poked them with the end of sticks until they fainted and then they dragged them off and killed them. Who would not weep at this cruelty?

In this way during the rebellion Santals had to lament the cruel and deceitful boastings of Sido and Kanhu.

Many people lost their lives. Many women became widows and many children orphans. Instead of blessings there was a curse upon us.

After the rebellion we Santals were scattered through poverty. Because of hunger, the Santals who had meant to be rulers had to go back to the Dekos, and beg them to feed us. Some people returned towards Sikar earning their livelihood by day labour as they went. Most people went on the land in order to earn their living and worked under Dekos. Others went to the towns to earn their living. In this way owing to hunger, we Santals crossed the Ganges to earn our living and were scattered as far as the Pandua forests, Sikharpur, Catai and the country of Barin. It was then we started selling fuel, leaves and charcoal. Some people did not return to their houses till they had provided themselves with a few cattle or bullocks out of their wages. It was

not until four or five years after the rebellion that people were again set up.

Sido and Kanhu were caught by the English and they tried them and found them guilty of causing many people to lose their lives, of making many women widows and many children orphans, of having left many people homeless and helpless and of having made them weep. They punished them for that. They hanged them to death on a mahua tree in the fields of Jhilimili<sup>1</sup>. As regards Bhogua of Pindra, it is said, he used to kill men and offer human sacrifices. For that reason he was cut into little pieces and was tortured till he died. They got their reward according to their deserts.

A few days after putting up our huts at Benagadia we heard that the Governor had restored order and he had sent notices saying that any cattle belonging to the Santals that had got lost during the rebellion and were missing might be seized and taken back by the owners if they found and recognized them within a year and when they took them no body could prevent them. They might take their cattle at will and might get them back without paying anything for them.

On getting this order from the Governor many people started looking for their cattle, and many people found theirs and got them back and were happy. Those people started their cultivation at once. At that time we were very greatly helped by this kindness of the Governor.

It was perhaps in the second year after the rebellion that the English began to build the railway. That also was of great help in supporting the Santals. We all went to work on the railway leaving only one or two at home to guard it. We sent seven people to work on the railway, myself and my six sisters. One day the Sahib of Phatepur had sent me to take a letter to the Sahib of Saita. While crossing the river More on my way, I suddenly saw and recognized a pair of our buffaloes. A Bhuiya was carrying beams on a cart with them.

I noticed and recognized the buffaloes and went on. I did not say anything to the Bhuiya. I went to the Sahib to deliver the letter. After I had handed it to him I said, 'Sahib, we Santals have an order from the Governor saying that we may seize and take back any of our cattle that were lost during the rebellion wherever we see them.' The Sahib told me that he also knew about that order and he asked me, 'Have you seen and recognized yours anywhere?' Then I told him, 'Yes, just now while I was crossing the More river I saw a pair of our buffaloes. A Bhuiya was bringing beams on a cart with them.'

When he heard this, the Sahib said to me, 'Very well. I am giving you an orderly. Take him and get back your buffaloes

<sup>1</sup> Bodding points out that Sido died fighting and only Kanhu was hanged.

and bring them to me with the Bhuiya. Then I went with the chaprasi and I seized the buffaloes. The chaprasi told the Bhuiya, 'Come to the Sahib with the buffaloes.' Then we went. The Sahib questioned the Bhuiya, 'Where did you find these two buffaloes?' The Bhuiya replied, 'I bought them from a man.' The Sahib then told him, 'Yes, but these two are the buffaloes of a Santal. Now their owner has found them; you must hand them over to him.' Then the Bhuiya released them without more to do.

Then with great joy I drove our buffaloes back. At home all my family, my parents, my elder brothers and all were very surprised to see the buffaloes and they also were overjoyed. They asked me 'Where have you found them?' Then I told them the story and they were very glad. We were greatly helped by having got the two buffaloes. My people at once began their cultivation and we seven stayed on working on the railway to save money for buying more food and plough cattle. When we had secured some plough cattle, we returned to cultivation.

After the rebellion we also got back our posts of *panda*, *cakladar* and *kudam naeke* which we had before. We got back all our service lands. Through cultivation we at last shed our poverty and day by day we saved as we had done before. We lived on the same service lands until we shifted from Benagadia to Thakurpura.<sup>1</sup>

W. G. ARCHER

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<sup>1</sup> *Chotrae Deshmanjhi reak' Katha*, pp. 7-23.

# THE BASTAR REBELLION, 1910

By E. CLEMENTI SMITH<sup>1</sup>

THE possibilities of an expedition taking place on the same longitude as Bombay seemed so remote in the Year of Grace 1910 that the rumours we had heard concerning this possibility were treated incredulously. But the unexpected always happens and on 17 February 1910, soon after our return from manoeuvres, orders were received to send 225 rifles and one machine gun from Jubbulpore to Bastar State to assist the police in suppressing a local rising against the Rajah. Until the first rumours of a rising were mentioned in one of the daily papers no one seems to have ever heard of the place. One imagined it to be some small territory too insignificant even to be shewn on an ordinary sized map but greatly to one's astonishment it turned out to be a State over 13,000 sq. miles situated in the Central Provinces.

At this time owing to some cases of plague in the lines the men were in camp on the parade ground. The early arrival of the Colonel and other officers in camp immediately led the men to think that something was up and like all Indians they immediately collected to hear the 'gup.' There was to be an expedition, Where? Was it China or Somaliland or Persia, who was going and how many? etc., etc. Practically the whole regiment had been inoculated a few days previously and most men were going about with their arms in slings, but the chance of going on active service immediately removed all soreness and stiffness especially when it became known that only 225 were to go and they would be selected from among the fittest. It was decided as far as possible that the men should be selected from the right wing. We were to take rations for 20 days and 200 rounds ammunition per man. The civil authorities at Raipur were collecting rations for a further 20 days: these we were to take over at the railhead to Dhamteri together with bullock-cart transport which was also being collected at Dhamteri, some locally and some in Raipur. The necessity of carrying rations for so many days was due to the fact that Bastar State produces nothing in the way of food-stuffs except rice.

By the evening of 18 February kit, stores, ammunition, and mules were packed on the narrow-gauge railway that runs from Jubbulpore to Gondia Junction, where it meets the main line. The next morning we entrained in the dark and just as it was getting light the train steamed out of the station, the men cheering and shouting whilst the dhols and seranais added to the din. Thanks to the presence of one of the District Traffic Superintendents of the line and by his thoughtfulness, arrangements were made to supply the men with water etc., at various halting places. At about 3 p.m., we arrived at Gondia Junction where we had to

<sup>1</sup> Lt-Col. E. Clementi Smith commanded the detachment which went to Bastar in 1910, and his account was written immediately afterwards, but has not hitherto been published.



# THE BASTER REBELLION 1910

1. The Lal Sahib as a prisoner in camp.
2. E. A. de Brett (author of *Chhattisgarh States Gazetteer*) and C. W. Gayer (author of *Lectures on Criminal Tribes*) at Jagdalpur.
3. The 22nd Punjabis in Camp at Keskal.







change on to the broad-gauge line to take us to Raipur; this necessitated the removal of everything from the narrow-gauge vans to those of the broad-gauge. We eventually arrived at Raipur at about 10-30 p.m., where again thanks to the foresight of the D. T. S. lamps and flares were erected all down the platform which assisted us greatly in the transfer of kit etc., to another narrow-gauge line which was to convey us over the final stage of the railway journey to Dhamteri. This branch line from Raipur to Dhamteri is practically only a steam train, the 3rd class carriages are open to the weather but the 1st class were very good though extremely small and it required much balancing and wedging in to remain on the seats at all when lying down whilst the train was in motion.

The pace we went was not excessive (as far as I remember it takes 5 hours to do the 40 miles to Dhamteri) but there seemed to be a great many curves as either I or my stable companion appeared to be shot on to the floor of the carriage alternately during the night, depending on which way the curve was. We arrived at Dhamteri some time in the early morning and began to unload the vans at about 6-30 a.m., Bullock-carts were ready waiting at the station to which were harnessed water buffaloes of the wildest description. The smell of the Punjab sepoy quite unnerved them when the loading of the carts began, and in a few minutes the surrounding country was full of empty carts drawn by bolting buffaloes and others which had got rid of their carts. However, the carts were eventually loaded whilst the buffaloes were herded a short distance away till this was completed. We pitched camp under a fine tope of mango trees about a mile from the station where we waited till the arrival of the remainder of the carts came in from Raipur, which they did later on in the afternoon. Dhamteri itself did not appear to be a very interesting place: the only impression left on one's memory were its topes of mango trees and a large tank and crowds of small boys most of whom appeared never to have seen a sepoy before. In the course of the afternoon we received a wire from the Political Agent at Jagdalpur pointing out that the situation there was serious and urging us to be at that place by the full moon *i.e.*, the 24th, as an attack was expected to take place that night. Jagdalpur is 140 miles from Dhamteri and the possibility of arriving there on the 24th seemed very remote as it meant covering this distance in 5 days. However we decided on making the effort but the fact that we had only bullock-cart transport greatly increased the difficulty. We could not move on the 19th as the Raipur carts required a rest, so our start had to be put off till the next morning. There is only one pucca road in this part of the country which runs from Dhamteri through Kanker State passing through its capital and then on to Jagdalpur and is continued on to Jeypore and Madras. Along this road was a single telegraph wire. On the morning of the 20th the march began. The transport consisted of 65 bullock-carts whilst

with the column we had 6 transport mules for water and entrenching tools. At Jagtara (10 miles) we had a long halt and in the evening pushed on to Charama (13 miles) arriving there at 10-30 p.m. The country for the first 8 miles was open and cultivated but in the last part of this stage the road led through thick jungle and slightly rising. About 4 miles short of Charama one descends over a steep ghat into flat country which is evidently nothing but a vast swamp in the rains. There were very few villages near the road but what there were seemed prosperous. By 10-30 p.m. on the 21st we had reached Murvinde 28 miles from Charama, passing through Lakampur and Kanker, where we halted for several hours. The Rajah of Kanker was kind enough to provide food for us all and pitched some tents for the use of the officers. The whole of the town turned out to meet us and accompanied the detachment to the camping-ground where there was plenty of shade and water. There is a post and telegraph office here and also a motor car or two which makes us realize that we are still in a civilized country. The country through which we passed on this day is typical of Central India; up and down hill through thick jungle with here and there open glades, occasionally one passed through parts like English parkland, the only difference being that here the trees and grass were brown instead of green. Water is scarce along the road except at the villages where there are wells, but the road passes over many dry beds of streams which doubtless in the rains are impassable. Murvinde, where we stayed the night, is the first halting-place in Bastar State. As far as we could make out it consisted of about two huts surrounded by a high stockade and is hardly worthy of even having a name at all. We were off before daylight on the 22nd, and after going about 5 miles arrived at the foot of a high thickly wooded ghat over which the road zigzagged for 2 miles with 9 "hairpin" turns offering a splendid opportunity for a protracted resistance. The approach to the bottom of the ghat leads between high hills covered with thick jungle which comes right down on to the road making the place into a death trap had our future enemies any intention of making use of this opportunity. However there is not a sign of anyone and we safely reached the top. A mile or more below, through a gap in the trees, we could see a small part of the road over which was crawling our leaden-footed transport. On the way we passed a shrine probably to some forest deity who appeared to subsist on evil-smelling oil, rags, and a few grains of rice. From the top of the ghat the road descends gradually into Keskal where we found a detachment of Central Province's police, a thana, post office, telegraph office and a bazaar. Our advent had been heralded by a sowar lent by the the Kanker State, one Borju by name. He was a weird figure clothed in bright yellow khaki, white putties and a blue lungi; his arms consisted of a rusty lance from which floated a yellow rag, a brand new bandolier, empty, an old sam-

browne sword-belt in the frog of which was an old umbrella, and over everything he wore a large blue cavalry cloak; his saddlery was of the most antique description held together with string. This curiosity was mounted on a roaring country-bred stallion. But in spite of his unprepossessing appearance he was most intelligent, reliable and willing, and proved extremely useful to us on many occasions. Keskai is 10 miles from Murvinde. A halt was made here till 2 p.m., as we were making our advanced base in this place. We left 25 rifles, and 20 days rations and sufficient transport in the thana and in the afternoon moved on to Pharasgaon, distance 17 miles, making a total of 27 miles for this day. Pharasgaon was reached after dark and was bivouacked in the deserted police thana. We left again at daybreak and marched to Jugani (7 miles) where we halted for 3 hours to enable the men to cook 2 days rations. Our plan now was to leave the bulk of the transport under an Indian officer with 30 rifles, with orders to move slowly on towards Jagdalpur and with the remainder to push on as fast as possible with a minimum of selected carts. The men were to carry 100 rounds of ammunition and 2 days cooked rations on the person, one blanket per man, and one day's rations and 8 boxes reserve ammunition were put into these carts which totalled five in number, and in addition there was one bullock ambulance tonga. At about 1-30 p.m., we started to make this final effort but the prospect of reaching Jagdalpur by 6-30 p.m. on the 24th as we had notified to the Political Agent, seemed more remote than ever as there were still 53 miles between us and that place. But the men were fit and keen and there was an air of determination in all ranks. We were now reckoning the march in stages and not in miles. At dusk we had reached Kondagaon which is a large village with treasury, thana and post and telegraph offices. The country was the same as we had already passed through, villages became scarcer and in those near the roadside there were no signs of life. The dak runners from Jagdalpur trotted past armed to the teeth with spears and axes. 'What news is there of Jagdalpur?'—'None Sahib.' 'Are the enemy still there?' 'Yes, plenty.' Having stared at us strange beings for a few minutes the monotonous trot and jingle would recommence till finally lost in the thick dust and rumbling of the transport and rearguard. At Kondagaon we were met by a European Sergeant of Police and the Thana-dar with the usual collection of loafers, very few this time, the majority having disappeared temporarily into the jungle and elsewhere for safety in spite of the presence of a strong police detachment. Having halted here for an hour we pushed on again to Dahikunga a further 12 miles, thus totalling 30 miles since daybreak. Some of our bullocks were now shewing signs of wear so we determined on commandeering temporarily any we might meet on the way. About a mile beyond Kondagaon we passed a few huts where the inmates came out to see this strange

sight—'Have you got any bullocks?' 'Yes.' 'Where?' 'In there'—pointing to a pitch-dark shed. Some men were sent in to secure 2 pairs but they were quickly forced to retire; the Bastar bullock has no liking for the Punjabi and the owner had eventually to send his own son with them. This man shortly afterwards disappeared but about a fortnight later came to claim payment. When asked why he had run away he said that he knew we were all going to certain destruction and as he wished to live a bit longer he had slipped back into the jungle and gone back home! By the time we had reached Dahikunga at 10-30 p.m., all were pretty well dead beat. There was no cover of any sort so we lay down in some open fields in the form of a square and in about 5 minutes everyone was asleep. At 3-30 a.m., on the 24th we were off again. Several men were very footsore but were in good spirits in spite of the fact that they had had very little sleep and rest since the 20th and the prospect of 31 miles still to be done—most of it under a blazing sun. Bhanpuri (12 miles) was reached at about 10 a.m., and Juna Bastar a further 9 miles at 1-30. This latter place had been burnt to the ground by the rebels, the only building standing were the walls of a school. We halted here for an hour before making the great effort. The question was—Would we be in time? Ten long miles still lay before us and most of the men nearly done. Luckily we found two carts here with bullocks which we seized for the use of four or five men whose feet were badly galled. At 3 p.m., we dragged ourselves wearily on to the road and the final stage began. To those who took part in it the memory of these last ten miles will ever remain fresh. The country now was much more open, only covered with low scrub from which one could get no shade, the sun seemed hotter than ever and the road appeared without end. The men were black with sweat and hardly recognizable through the coatings of dust. Conversation had ceased except on the part of some tireless spirits each of whom seemed to have the endurance of ten men. On, on, on, mile after mile, each successive one seeming longer than the last. Will we ever reach Jagdalpur? Will we ever get another cool drink in place of the tepid stuff in our water bottles? Will the sun ever set? There is happily an end even to bad things and we at last catch a glimpse of a large white building just as the sun goes down, which gives us fresh energy. But the end of our troubles is not yet in sight, we still have about 4 miles to cover and it is a footsore and weary band that reach the bank of the Indravati river one mile north of the town. There is obviously a ford as the cart road running down into the river shews but we do not know how much water there is and cannot risk our meagre rations and ammunition so we have to use the only raft; this represents an herculean task to men who are so exhausted that having once sat down they can hardly stand up again. However we are required on the other side of the

river and it is to accomplish this that the efforts of the last 4 days have been directed, so everything has to come out of the carts and into the raft whilst the carts and mules go by the ford. It is just past 6 p.m., and quite dark and in spite of the bitter disappointment at having to unload everything just before our journey's end we have the satisfaction of knowing that we have arrived almost to the minute as arranged 5 days previously.

About 9 p.m., everything was across and we were very thankful to know from the Political Agent, who had come down to meet us, that our services would be required no further that night. We left the provisions and ammunition under a guard at the landing place, and the rest formed themselves into a rough perimeter on the high bank above, and almost instantaneously everyone was sleeping like the dead. These men had covered 140 miles in under 5 days, the last 65 of which had been done in 38 hours. During the 25th the men remained in the bivouack of the previous night. The D. S. P. came down to the camp in a motor and took us off to look at the rebel camps which were in the scrub south of the Jeypore road. We went through the town of Jagdalpur.

The road took us along the edge of the tank, a large sheet of water on the west of the town, past the palace, a large white square building surrounded by a high wall, then through the town of Jagdalpur itself. We passed through well-kept broad streets but the whole place had a depressed look owing to the fact that very few people were about and nearly every shop was shut. It is a comparatively small town and we soon arrived on the Jeypore road along which we traversed about a mile, sufficiently far to let us have a look at our enemies and their leaf-shelters. We now found ourselves in the curious position of reconnoitring an aboriginal enemy in a motor car. Needless to say we did not stop very long or go very far as even as it was they had a good opportunity of cutting us off, but they shewed no signs of being disturbed and apparently took no interest in our movements. We then went back to the Mission House which is just south of the town and from the top of the roof there had a good view of the piece of jungle which was occupied by the enemy. From here we proceeded to the civil camp about a mile south of the town and on a slight eminence. Here we found the Central Province police in camp. A council of war was then held and it was decided to surround that piece of jungle to the S. E. of the town in which were the enemy's camps. The country occupied by the enemy was about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles by 2 miles broad, rising in the centre to about 20 feet above the ordinary level of the surrounding country. The Central Province police were to proceed to the south end and take up a position behind a broad clearing, the Madras police were to occupy the west side, police sowars were to patrol along the Copia Bahar nullah on the east and turn back any rebels who might try to bolt in that direction, whilst the 22nd Punjabis were to stop them

from crossing the Jeypore road and entering Jagdalpur from that direction which reports led us to believe they intended doing. We were assisted in this 'drive' by a long barbed wire fence which ran from the Jeypore road in a S. W. direction to the Gaya Munda, a large tank, and from there towards the south. We were all to be in position by 5-30 a.m., the Political Agent was to accompany our column, a state sowar was to be sent into the various camps as 'amadari' or bearer of a mango bough, a sign of peace, and call on the rebels to come out into the open and surrender or else they would be shot. This then was the plan to be carried out on the morning of the 26th. Spies reported their numbers to be about 5,000 but these numbers turned out to be grossly exaggerated. On the afternoon we moved from our bivouack on the river bank to the northern end of the Gaya Munda close to the camp of the Madras Police. At about 4-30 a.m., on the morning of the 26th the Political Agent with his sowars arrived in our camp. Shortly after the men fell in and at about 4-45 we started. There was a bright moon which greatly assisted us and preceded by the police sowars we moved to our appointed place. Here we halted whilst the police sowars trotted on down the Jeypore road to take up their position along the Gorla Bahar nullah. They had hardly left us when the alarm was given by a man who had evidently been lying on or near the road. In a few seconds the whole jungle resounded with weird cries gradually getting fainter and fainter as the alarm spread from one rebel camp to another. We quickly deployed into single rank, flanks thrown back, the maxim in the centre of the line, half a company formed the rear face leaving room for mules, dhoolies etc. The country to our immediate front was covered with thick patches of scrub, there was a belt of this scrub about 200 yards wide and behind this was thick jungle, to our right front was a large tope of mangoe trees in which was situated one of the main rebel camps. We could see here and there groups of the rebels running about in a wild state of alarm; they apparently had not realized the possibilities of any movements at night being made against them, but beyond this and making a great noise nothing happened. After waiting for about 15 minutes a sound of heavy firing was heard from the direction of the Madras police and also to our left shewing that attempts were being made by the rebels to break away in those directions. About 20 minutes later dawn broke, and it became light enough to send in the 'amadari' to call on them to surrender but for a long time there was no result. We had with us a few native Christians from the Mission who could understand the language of the rebels and these also were sent into the south to several of the groups of rebels who were visible to us. They managed to persuade a few of them that they weren't immediately going to be killed and brought them to us. The situation having been carefully explained to these rebels they also were sent back.

to bring in their friends. This plan seemed to bear fruit as shortly afterwards several large bodies of rebels came in and surrendered. They seemed to be of all ages and quite tame, not the bloodthirsty ruffians we had been led to believe. They were apparently of two sorts, Mariahhs and Muriahhs, the former being the hillmen whilst the later came from the plains. Bows and arrows, axes and spears were their chief equipment. Some were armed, others were not, but we subsequently discovered that those who came in without arms had hidden them in the bushes when they came in to surrender. Shortly after this we moved further into the scrub and halted again. Every now and then a small band came in and gave themselves up. Except for occasional shots everything now was quiet and as the groups of rebels now visible seemed disinclined either to run away or come in we sent one section of men to the right and one to the left to beat up the scrub in our vicinity and take prisoner any we found. In this way about a hundred were secured; there was an air of depression about these bands and they made no sign of resistance, putting their arms on the ground when indicated to do so and readily following a man who was to shew them the way to where our main body was. As there seemed to be no rebels left in and about their camps we formed an extended line and advanced through to the jungle towards the position held by the Central Province police. Only one or two more rebels were found in this part of the jungle but these were extraordinarily well hidden in quite small bushes and nearly escaped detection. We proceeded as far as the clearing in front of the Central Province police where a halt was made. It was then decided that an extended line should be formed from the Gopia Bahar on our right to the position held by the Madras Police on our left, and the jungle swept again. The C. P. police formed the right of the line, and the Madras police the left, whilst we remained in the centre. A few more prisoners were taken, they were evidently too frightened to run away and probably again hoped to escape detection. This return journey enabled us to examine the rebel camps which were very primitive—nearly always situated under a tree, they consisted of boughs intertwined with no head-cover. The space inside was kept quite clean and many had a small annexe which appeared to be reserved as a praying place. In the main camps we found quantities of grain stuff of all kinds, seeds, roots and a few chickens. The grain etc., was kept in small baskets made of palm leaves with a covering formed of some kind of large leaf pruned together with thorns. A large number of bows and arrows were also collected and here and there an axe or brass cooking-pot was to be found hidden in the bushes. Before returning to camp we made over all our provisions to the police and burnt everything of no use. Over 400 rebels were captured; they were of all ages from 16 upwards and seemed to be much astonished at the day's proceedings. We



stayed in Jagdalpur till 2 March and so had an opportunity of seeing something of the place. The town is quite uninteresting and produced nothing of local manufacture as far as we could make out. A few of the shops had carved doors evidently very old; we tried to find out when they were done but there seemed to be no 'old inhabitant' who could inform us. We visited the palace one day: from the south one enters through a large gateway supported by a tired sentry with a rusty old musket, this leads into a large courtyard where one comes face to face with a small antique mortar tied up with bits of hoop-iron, it seems quite lost here and very humble. A few horses were picketted under a few thin trees but beyond this there were no signs of life. Every window was barricaded and the palace appeared unoccupied. We did not attempt to enter. Apparently the buildings on both sides were barracks, treasury, etc.; here and there were a few figures in dirty khaki lying about, we at first thought they were bundles of clothes but they turned out to be part of the State forces.

The tank provided us with a little sport in the way of duck shooting. It is a sheet of water about a mile long and half a mile wide, very deep in places with its northern and western sides formed by an enormous bund. The only craft on it were a few dug-outs which seemed to be permanently half under water and there was one boat, the 'Rajah sahib's.' This was evidently of European extraction with a flat bottom and drawing only about 2 inches of water, in the centre was fastened a wooden arm-chair. A journey in this, to the small temple in the centre of the lake, was a most dangerous undertaking. The ancient mariner who owned this vessel hardly dared to move his pole whilst the passengers hardly dared even to breathe—the slightest movement caused an unpleasant rocking. The evening of 1 March saw us back across the river where we bivouacked on the northern bank and the next morning at daybreak we began what we then thought our homeward march. We were to move by slow stages up the eastern side of Bastar State through disaffected areas as far as Keskal where we were to join the main road again, a police force was to perform a similar duty on the west. Our first day's march took us to Juna Bastar and from here we branched off in a north easterly direction *via* Baniagaon, Amrati, Makri, Banskot, to Keskal where we joined the high road again. This part of our journeyings was uneventful. One day's march was like the next. There was no road but we moved along winding tracks which led through thick jungles and over deep nullahs; getting the transport carts over these nullahs necessitated a great deal of digging of ramps and laying a temporary road of boughs and grass over the sandy bottoms. In several places where the approaches were steep about 8 to 10 men per cart were required to act as brakes during the descent into the nullah. Here the cart would be handed on to another squad to be assisted over the deep parts and on arrival

at the further side a fresh number of men would hurl themselves on to each cart and with much pushing, shouting and exhortations to the bullocks by voice and hand they eventually reached the top of the further bank. Occasionally the track led over large open spaces covered with high grass, these places appeared to be swamps at one time of the year and it was always in such places that the worst parts of the track were to be found. We passed through villages nearly always deserted, but should anyone be found he was always commandeered by the forest official who was with us to show us the best way to the next camp. During one of the marches the track led for miles through burnt jungle and grass and by the time we arrived at the camping-place we were black from head to foot. The village where we were to stay the night had also been burnt, this burnt track remained till well on into the next day's march and it was a great relief to get into the living jungle again and one was able to breathe freely instead of taking in particles of cinders at each breath. At Makri we met the agent of a Sleeper Company; we had been led to expect that this place had been destroyed by the rebels but they had not been near the place. The workmen employed by this company had all bolted leaving everything behind them but the wave of the rebellion had not swept as far north as this. We eventually reached Keskhal on the morning of the 11th having covered, as near as we could make out, just over 100 miles since leaving Jagdalpur. The main part of our small force had hardly got into Keskhal when we received a telegram from the Political Agent at Jagdalpur stating that the police detachment operating on the west had been attacked at a place called Chota Dongar about 80 miles to the S. W., and were hard pushed to defend themselves. We were to move there as fast as possible. On receiving this news we decided to march at daybreak on the 12th, as an immediate start was not possible owing to fresh arrangements having to be made with regard to empty carts and redistribution of supplies. To get to Chota Dongar two courses were open to us,—either to march direct on to Chota Dongar through the jungle or to march down the high road as far as Kondagaon and there branch off due west. Marching *via* Kondagaon was the longer route but it enabled us to make use of a good road where we could be in touch with Jagdalpur through the telegraph line. The direct track through the jungle from Keskhal was unknown whilst the track from Kondagaon to Chota Dongar was known to be suitable for carts, and there was also information regarding watering-places. The longer route was therefore decided on and at 4 a.m. on the 12th the detachment marched out of Keskhal leaving all the empty carts and some supplies under a guard of 20 rifles. Jugani, 25 miles, was reached on the afternoon of the same day. On the 13th we marched at 6 a.m., arriving at Kondagaon (11 miles) at about 9-30 a.m., where a halt was made till the afternoon. Here arrangements were made with

the Tahsildar to supply coolies for the transport of our kit and rations beyond Marina from which place onwards to Chota Dongar we heard the road was quite impassable for carts. On the afternoon of the same day the detachment pushed on to Bamini, a further 6 miles. Just before getting into Bamini we ran up against our old friend the Narangi nullah which here is broad and sandy necessitating the construction of the usual road of boughs and grass and it was not till well after dark that the last cart was hauled over. Daybreak on the 14th saw us en route for Marina (25 miles). Owing to the direct track between Bamini and Marina being unsuitable for wheeled transport we had to make a long detour to the south and then to the north-west. About 15 miles from Bamini we had to cross the Baordig nullah where the usual arrangements for getting across had to be carried out again, but by nightfall the last cart had got there having been nearly 17 hours on the road. At Marina we left all the carts with the exception of the hospital tonga. The bullocks required a well-earned rest having been continuously at work since 19 February and had covered about 350 miles since that date. The coolies, provided by the tehsildar of Kondagaon, came into use and on the early morning of the 15th we began our final march into Chota Dongar—distance 12 miles. Our transport now consisted of 100 coolies, 9 mules and the hospital tonga. One blanket per man and rations for 3 days were taken on from here. For the first 8 miles the track was the worst we had as yet traversed, it lay over rocky undulating country broken up by deep nullah, and it was with great difficulty that even the hospital tonga was dragged over it. On arrival at Chota Dongar, we found that the police had already arrived and that directions had been sent to the neighbouring Mariah villages situated in the hills for all the head men to come in by that afternoon, otherwise a punitive force would enter the country the next day. On the following morning we visited the police camp for news and found that their directions had not been complied with and that it was decided to enter the Mariah country. We had an opportunity of seeing types of Mariahs among those who had come in. Many had faces of a negro character, wooly hair, flat faces and thick lips, whilst others looked like women, with fine features and long hair tied into a knot behind the head. Except for a blanket or cotton sheet wrapped round the shoulders they all wore the minimum of clothing. Many had necklaces of brass wire and beads, large wooden earrings and strings of beads in their hair.

At about 9-30 a.m., the punitive force left Chota Dongar, the detachment of 22nd Punjabis forming the advance guard, followed by the police sowars and foot police. We were to visit and destroy villages which were known to have taken part in the attack on the police detachment on the 10th inst. At first the track led over fairly open country about half a mile from a river, it then passed through a narrow gorge, where the river debouches from the hills,

covered with thick bamboo jungles where a few well-armed men could hold back an army; but the rebels seemed to have no idea of the art of making war and we passed through this trap without any opposition. The narrow track was sometimes high on the steep hill side whilst at others it was but a few feet above the river, and necessitated a very slow and cautious advance and eventually after about 3 miles, after crossing a dry branch of the river we emerged on to a comparatively flat piece of jungle-covered country. Two miles further on we arrived in the vicinity of the village of Rajpura. A halt is made whilst a few go forward to reconnoitre. Except for chickens, pigs and goats, amongst the scattered huts there is no sign of life and our guide is sent on to tell any there may be left to come out and give themselves up.

The arrival of our guide in the village is the signal for the few men remaining in the village to bolt; however the persuasive tongue of the guide induces them to return and surrender. They are examined as to the whereabouts of any arms and the rest of the inhabitants, but beyond ascertaining that they had gone to the hills no information is obtained. The village consists of a collection of dark wooden huts covered with a thick thatching of grass. After all the live stock had been secured it was burnt. About noon the detachment of police arrived, but they only halted for about 2 hours and then pushed on again in a north-westerly direction, with the intention of making a tour deeper into the hills and joining us again 2 days later at Jhuri (to the south-west). On the afternoon of the same day we sent out two small columns to destroy two neighbouring villages. Both were found to be deserted. We bivouacked for the night at Rajpura and were delighted when the state elephants arrived at about 8 p.m., from Marina with 3 days more rations.

On the 17th we made the usual early start and marched in a south-westerly direction to Marumna—a distance of about 10 miles. This having been burnt the detachment proceeded to Jhuri—another 5 or 6 miles, where we halted for the night. We stayed at Jhuri till the afternoon of the following day and heard that the whole force, including the police, were to return to Chota Dongar. This place was reached just at nightfall and we heard for the second time that we were to return to Jubblepore as the rebellion was at an end. However, this was not to be the case as on our way back to Kondagaon we heard that a fresh outbreak had occurred south of Jagdalpur and that we were to proceed there as fast as possible. On the night of the 19th a halt was made on the Baordig Nuallh, 17 miles from Chota Dongar. Our cart transport had moved towards Kondagaon from Marina independently of us, and on 20 March we were again assembled at Kondagaon. As the rising in the south was not serious, we obtained permission to halt at Kondagaon for a few days to give the men a well-earned and necessary rest. They had been marching

incessantly through dense jungles and under a burning sun, often on short rations for 32 days, and had covered a distance of nearly 400 miles in this time. Their clothes, or what remained of them, were in rags, most of their boots were worn out and equipment torn. A relieving column with stores was then on its way and it was hoped that it would join us at Kondagaon, but owing to a change in the situation at Jagdalpur it was necessary to leave before this detachment could arrive, so on 28 March we proceeded to Dahikonga en route to the capital. On the 29th the detachment marched to Jhuna Bastar. On the 30th we reached Jagdalpur again and camped in the now familiar spot under the top of mango trees near the river. A halt is made here till 6 April, the detachment arrived from head quarters on the 2nd. On 7 April we advanced towards the Kaingir nullah to the South of Jagdalpur, a halt being made at Bodel (15 miles) where it was intended to make an advanced base. A reconnaissance was made on 8 April but no information regarding the whereabouts of the rebels was obtained. On 9 April we halted at Bodel. On the 10th we moved out of Bodel with the intention of making the advanced base at Chitalgour but owing to the hilly nature of the country and the innumerable nullahs a halt was made at Gaonpador. From here a small column pushed on 7 miles to attack the rebels who are supposed to be encamped in a nullah. Only deserted camps were found and after covering about 20 miles the column returned. On 11 and 12 April columns again went out taking 2 days rations but as usual found only deserted camps; they returned to Gaonpador on the 13th having accomplished nothing. On 14 April the whole force returned to Jagdalpur (18 miles) *via* the battlefield of Alnar where the police and rebels had surprised each other on the 28 March. A halt was now made at Jagdalpur until the 17th where we received orders to return. From 18 to 28 April the time was spent in marching to the rail-head at Dhamteri. We took with us the Dowager Rani, the Lal Sahib and about 60 important prisoners to be handed over to the civil authorities at Raipur. This last march was about the most trying part of the whole show. The heat was terrific, water was scarce and the men began to go down with fever and it was with a great feeling of relief that we got back to Jubbulpore on the 30th. A detachment under an Indian officer was left behind at Jagdalpur but this shortly after was sent out of the country back to the regiment and the Bastar rebellion of 1910 was at an end.

The causes of the rising were briefly these:

1. *Forest Administration.* The aboriginal tribes have from time immemorial practiced shifting-cultivation, leaving their patch of land after 3 years. They have also the habit of firing the brushwood to clear the ground for large game beats which they organize. Recently forest reserves approximating to the reserves in Government forests have been introduced. In these the above

2 practices are not allowed and restrictions have been placed on the previous unlimited rights to wood and forest produce. These reserves are considered a great hardship by the aborigines who naturally do not understand the importance of forest conservancy. The hardship was accentuated by the existence of a corrupt and oppressive subordinate forest establishment.

2. *Begars i.e.*, forced labour. Villages are expected to render to the village thekaders *i.e.*, lessees and to the Raja and the *muafidars i.e.*, people, mostly members of the Raj family, who hold free grants of villages, a certain amount of labour free. The limits of this have been greatly exceeded and people not entitled to it *e.g.* State officials at Jagdalpur have forced people to come and build houses etc. for them free.

3. *Schools*. People object to the spread of education, especially when a collection is levied from them to build the village school and then they are forced to build the school house without payment. Masters too try to live at the expense of the villagers and beat children who do not bring them food.

4. *Police*. The police are under-paid and badly supervised. The usual forms of police-oppression are therefore rampant.

5. *Bisahi*. This word denotes the system under which a food-grain rate is fixed and at that rate State servants can buy grain from the villagers for *their own consumption*. Instead they force villagers to sell at a much lower rate and buy much more than they require.

6. General oppression on the part of the village lessees.

7. With these grievances the people found at Jagdalpur a young and weak Raja who was in the hands of his officials and a faction in the Raj family who would be only too glad to revert to the old principles of administration, under which the state existed only for supplying as much money as possible for the vices of the Raj family. This faction was headed by Lal Kalendra Singh, full cousin of the present Raja's father, a man who had twice been Diwan and who had twice been found wanting. The Raj had become *Angrez, i.e.*, British ideas of administration, with variations as is shown above, had been introduced and the idea was to make the Raj *deshi* again.

8. The objects of the people therefore fitted in with those of the malcontents at court. In the rising of 1876 the policy of sitting round Jagdalpur and starving it out succeeded and was tried again. The rebels had an idea of disposing of the whole affair before interference from outside could interrupt them. Therefore the wire was cut, post stopped and roads blocked, and the objectionable order of things was to be abolished by burning the police station houses, the forest nakas and the schools. Officials and *pardeshis, i.e.* mostly low-caste people from Chhattisgarh who had settled in the State, were to be plundered and driven away.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> This concluding note on the causes of the rebellion appears to be by C. W. Gayer (author of *Lectures on Criminal Tribes*) who was in Bastar at the time. The note is dated 7 April 1910.

# SAORA FITURIS

BY VERRIER ELWIN

SAORA disturbances in the Ganjam Agency are nowadays of two kinds, one economic and excited by the exactions of the Panos, and the other in reaction against attempts of the Forest Department to check axe-cultivation and reserve the forest.

Saora hostility to the Panos or Doms is of very long standing. 'Throughout the Jeypore country,' says Francis, 'the Doms are by far the most troublesome class. Their favourite crime is cattle-theft for the sake of the skins, but in 1902 a Dom gang in Naurangpur went so far as to levy blackmail over a large extent of country and defy for some months all attempts at capture. The loss of their cattle exasperates the other hill folk to the last degree and in 1899 the Naiks (headman) of sixteen villages in the north of Jeypore taluk headed an organized attack on the houses of the Doms, which in the most deliberate manner they razed to the ground in some fifteen villages. The Doms had fortunately got scent of what was coming and made themselves scarce, and no bloodshed occurred. In the next year some of the Naiks of the Ramagiri side of Jeypore Taluk sent round a jack branch, a well-recognized form of the fiery cross, summoning villagers other than Doms to assemble at a fixed time and place, but this was luckily intercepted by the police. The Agent afterwards discussed the whole question with the chief Naiks of Jeypore and south Naurangpur. They had no opinion of the deterrent effects of mere imprisonment on the Doms. "You fatten them and send them back," they said, and they suggested that a far better plan would be to cut off their right hands.'<sup>1</sup>

The antagonism between the Panos or Doms and the hillmen persists, even though in many ways the Panos have made themselves indispensable. But their exactions are most grievous; they sometimes attempt to seduce Saora girls; and there have been in consequence a number of *fituris* (as mob violence is called in this part of the world) of which the disturbances of 1941 may be taken as typical. The second week of January of that year witnessed a wide-spread reaction against the unbearable economic pressure, the detested cultural and sexual interference, the inability of Government to remedy the situation. On 10 January a mob of about a thousand Saoras, armed with cudgels and spears and shouting war-cries, descended from the hills on the Pano quarter of Rayaghada. They declared afterwards that since the Panos had robbed them of their possessions they were going to recover them by force. But the Panos here were ready for them and gave them a hot reception. Before much damage could be done and not a single Pano had been hurt, the great mob had been scattered and two of their number lay dead on the ground.

1. W. Francis, *Vizagapatam District Gazetteer* (Madras, 1907), pp. 204 f.

The following day, 11 January 1941, two more armies of about five hundred Saoras each, drunk and furious, came to retaliate and revenge themselves for the death of their comrades. This time their attack was more successful, even though by now a number of Government officials were assembled on the spot. The Saoras set fire to the Pano settlement, burnt the Pastor's house to the ground, killed three Panos and injured others and carried off as much of their property as they could. The aim was, as they said in Court, 'to kill the Panos and drive them out of the Agency since Government had refused to do so.'

At about the same time a band of about sixty Saoras attacked the Christian Panos of Ballidi village and broke down their houses and looted their goods and cattle.

A few days later, on 14 January, a mob of some two hundred Saoras attacked the Christian Panos settled at Parisal and chased them out of the village. They looted their property and returned home without shedding blood. The reason given was that the Pano were buying their goods forcibly at a very cheap rate and that they were now getting some economic compensation. Again on 18 January, another angry mob attacked the Pano houses at Tabarada. Shortly before this the Saoras had held a meeting and decided that the Panos must be removed from the Agency. As Government would not act, they must take things into their own hands. The Panos heard of this and sent their women and children away, with as much property as they could move. When the Saoras made the attack, the Panos who were not of such stout mettle as their brethren in Rayaghada, fled to the jungle and the Saoras were able to wreck their quarters and loot their property. Among other things the Saoras took pigs and goats which they killed and ate on the spot—a characteristic touch.

The relations of the Saoras with the forest officials has, thanks to the tact and intelligent sympathy of the latter, been marked by less violence, though from time to time there has been determined Saora opposition to rules which they refused to accept. The first information we have about the condition of the forests in the Parlakimidi Malialis dates from 1834, when the woods are said to have been so heavy as to be almost impenetrable. But by 1877 the forest round Gumma and Gaiba had almost disappeared. In 1881 C. F. MacCartie reported that 'the once famous forests of the Kimidi Malialis have disappeared under the combined influence of kumeri cultivation and indiscriminate felling for sale,' and urged—not the abolition of Saora axe-cultivation—but the 'absolute protection from the axe of the low country speculator for many years.' In 1907 H. T. Reilly, a civilian, and S. Cox, a Forest Officer, made a report on the Parlakimidi Maliahs and insisted on the seriousness of the forest situation. They found that denudation of the hills had already seriously affected the water supply and that the pressure of population had already



resulted in for too short a rotation in the use of clearings: 'the free stools have lost their vitality and the resultant coppice-growth has become poorer and poorer until in places it has almost ceased to come up at all.' The Reilly-Cox Report pointed out the interesting fact in the old days, 'general unrest and constant fighting,' combined with outbreaks of a very virulent type of small-pox, had kept down the population. The vaccinator, in fact, had presented the Forest Department with an entirely new problem by keeping too many people alive. This Report advocated the reservation of the upper slopes of certain ranges near the main streams; a total of about 15% of the entire area of 275 square miles was to be so treated.

At the same time the Government of Madras declared that 'Government have always claimed the forests in the Maliahs... The Savaras therefore have no legal rights in them. Some compensation may of course be given them as a matter of grace, especially if their huts are interfered with.' This was hardly satisfactory, and it was fortunate, both for Government and the Saoras, that a few years later there was appointed to Parlakimidi an exceptionally understanding and tactful Forest Officer, H. G. Welchman. Welchman managed to persuade the Saoras to agree to the reservation of a considerable area, but even he had his troubles. In 1912, there was a scare, perhaps rather an exaggerated scare, when the Saoras of the Jerango Mutta decided that they would not allow any further reservation and threatened Welchman with a great show of violence, though it is perhaps doubtful whether they ever intended to do anything. At all events when Welchman brought out his camera, the whole mob took fright and scattered after firing a few arrows into the air.<sup>1</sup>

The work of reservation went on steadily if slowly and the Forest Department now has some splendid forests to show for the patience and care of those early years. From time to time the Saoras resisted, though seldom violently. It is impossible to give a full account of such reactions, but a few samples may be of interest. In 1927, for example, the entire male population of Taraba, thirty-eight men, invaded the Velladi block on 5 and 6 February and cleared the forest for cultivation. It was considered that the people had a 'good case but in the interests of discipline they were sent to jail for six weeks. When they came out, they got their clearings. This was a generous act, but it had an unfortunate result. The idea spread among the Saoras that once you were punished for cutting a piece of forest, once you paid your fine or went to jail, you automatically established a right over the land for which you had suffered. In 1937 large

1. Later Welchman formed the Ganjam Labour Corps of Konds, Saoras, and Uriyas. He died of dysentery and appendicitis in 1919 while still in charge of it. He was so popular among the Saoras that some of them adopted his distinctive method of dressing a moustache.

acres in the Raida block were cleared by the Karmatal and Munisingi Saoras. They were convicted and after imprisonment returned home firmly convinced that this forest belonged to them. They cleared the forest again the following year and in 1940. In the end the Forest Department was forced to adopt the distasteful policy of uprooting whatever crops were sown in a forbidden area, and the Saoras were no longer punished in any other way.

A few years ago, when the people of Bodo Okhra prepared to fell part of the Reserve, the Bhuiya performed a special sacrifice of buffaloes and pigs to ensure that the Forest Officials would not interfere. He has since lost some of his influence, for his sacrifices were lamentably ineffective.

These instances will be sufficient to show that the Saoras have not yet lost all the turbulence which once made them so notorious. But today most of it is show and bluster. Most of their reactions against the outer world are indeed the effect of almost unbearable economic pressure and exploitation. In their attitude to the forest we must remember that they firmly believe that the forest belongs to them and that they have a right to do what they will with it. They have been there, they say, for centuries ; it is their life and they consider themselves justified in resisting any attempt to deprive them of it. ' Civilization ' may regret this attitude but cannot stigmatize it as wicked or immoral.

## NOTES AND QUERIES

ORIGINAL notes, queries, answer to queries, quotations from journals and newspapers for this section should be sent to Dr Verrier Elwin, Patangarh P. O., Mandla District, C.P., India.

### THE KOL INSURRECTION

THE HO, MUNDA AND URAON rebellion of 1831-32 was preceeded by various attempts to reform the feudatory police of the Raja of Chota Nagpur by official police of the British. Sir Maurice Hallett and Sir T. S. Macpherson give an account of the rebellion.

The police system was at first no more successful then the feudal system which it had supeseded. The Raja was not unnaturally opposed to a measure which diminished his authority and increased his expenditure and did all he could to nullify its effects. In 1819 he was deprived of his control over the police, in consequence of his failure to render any assistance to the Magistrate in the detection of a case in which a woman was murdered for having practised magical arts against the Raja's son and daughter. Another cause of the failure of this system of government was that the new police officers were foreigners from Bihar or the North-west, who joined with the alien jagirdars in oppressing the people. The aborigines had no hope of obtaining justice. "The Raja by no means satisfied at his own loss of dignity and authority gave but surly answers to complaints who came before him. The darogas or native police officers, the resident officials under the British Government, declared that it was not competent for them to decide on the grievances which most harassed the Kols, who complained that they had been oppressed by foreigners, Muhammadans, Sikhs and others. It often happened that the unfortunate Kol who with difficulty made his way to the far-off station of Chatra or Shergati found the tables turned on him when he got there. A host of witnesses in the pay of the opposite party were already on the spot, prepared to prove that he had not only no rights in the land but was a turbulent rebel besides." Typical of the state of the country were the disturbances which broke out in Tamar in 1820. Major Ross, who had been appointed in 1819 to be the first 'Political Agent' in South Bihar and the recently ceded districts adjacent to that Province' and was responsible for the tranquillity of the country, reported that the disturbance was due to the oppression practised by the Raja of Tamar upon one of his vassals, Raghunath Singh. Raghunath Singh in the hope of the redress went to the court at Chatra, but the evidence kept in readiness for him by the Tamar zamindar caused his committal to the court of Circuit and his condemnation to transportation or imprisonment for life. Tamar had been in a disturbed state for some years and in 1820 two Mundas, Rudu and Kantu, at the head of three hundred followers, attacked a Manjhi whom they regarded as responsible for a drought in the previous years, murdered his son, burnt his village, and then proceeded to vent their wrath upon other landlords. For a long time they defied the authorities and were not reduced till military operations on a large scale had been taken against them.

'After the suppression of this disturbance, the country was temporarily tranquil, but the discontent of the aborigines at last broke out in the great Kol Insurrection of 1831-32. The immediate occasion of the rising was an incident which occurred in pargana Sonpur. The Maharaja's brother, Kuar Harnath Sahi, had received the pargana as a maintenance grant and gave out the villages in farm to Sikhs, Muhammadans and others, over the heads of the Mankis and Mundas. Twelve villages belonging to Singhrui Manki were leased to a Sikh who, not content with taking away his lands, carried off his sisters as concubines. A graphic description of their grievances is given in the statement of Bindra Manki, Singh's brother, taken at the time by the Magistrate of Chatra. He narrates that a band of Sonpur carried off all their cattle, in return for two old buffaloes which they had borrowed from him, that they took the law into their own hands

and recovered two bullocks with the aid of some men lent by the Raja of Bandgaon, that a complaint was lodged against them at Shergati and that they were seized by the Munshi and Jamadar of Chakradharpur, but after being kept in the stocks for fifteen days they effected their escape; that in revenge for their escape, the Munshi and Jamadar carried off and ravished their wives; that they told their grievances to the Raja of Porahat who merely told them to do as they pleased, but to be careful not to get him into trouble. The end of the statement is pathetic: "We returned home, invited all the Kols, our brethren and caste to assemble at the village Lankha in Tamar, where we had a consultation. The Pathans had taken our honour and the Sikhs our sisters and the Kuar had forcibly deprived us of our estate of twelve villages. Our lives we considered of no value and being of one caste and brethren, it was agreed upon that we should commence to cut, plunder, murder, and eat. We said if any were hanged, it would be we four; if any put in irons, we should be the four. It is with this resolution that we have been murdering and plundering those who have deprived us of both honour and homes, and for such outrages our grievances would come to light and notice would be taken of them and justice rendered."

The principal leaders of the revolt came from Porahat in the district of Singhbhum, and these joined with the Sonpur Mundas to carry into effect the resolution made at Lankha. On December 20th a number of villages, held in farm by the Sikhs, Hari Singh and Diyal Singh, were plundered and burned by a body of seven hundred Kols under Surga, the aggrieved Munda of Singhbhum and Singhrai. A few days later the villages of two Muhammadan thikadars were also burnt, the servant of one of them being thrown into the fire. Jafar Ali Khan, the farmer of village Gingria, had incurred the special hostility of the Mundas by refusing to pay fair prices to the Munda women who came to sell iron; his village was destroyed and ten inmates of his house including some Munda women whom he had seduced, were burnt alive. It was probably the intention of the insurgents to confine the plundering and looting to Sonpur and its neighbourhood. In January 1832 the number of insurgents was about 1,200 but the arrows of war were circulated through the whole country and by the middle of January the Oraons had joined the Hos and Mundas. The Nazir of the Shergati court, who was sent to tranquilize the country, only succeeded in aggravating the situation by arresting one of the leaders; to his regret he would recover their hands if they desisted from their campaign of rapine and bloodshed, the Kols indignantly replied that they would obey none but the Maharaja and leave not a foreigner alive in Nagpur. In every village the Sads, or Hindus, and the Dikus, or foreign landlords were murdered or, receiving warning in time, fled the country. Even the petty Rajas of Rahe, Bundu, Tamar and Barwe, though neither Sads nor Dikus, narrowly escaped with their lives, when those places were sacked and destroyed. The British authorities were entirely unprepared for an outbreak of such magnitude. Captain Wilkinson, with a few troops, reached the outskirts of the plateau in the middle of January and compelled Pithaurie and the neighbouring villages to submit and had some hard fighting round Nagri. By the middle of February sufficient troops were collected to form three flying columns which swept the country in parallel lines, as they advanced from south to north. The columns met with little resistance save in Sonpur where the insurgents had abandoned their villages and taken to the hills. All the columns concentrated in this country and secured the surrender of the leaders on March 19th 1832. To Captain Wilkinson belongs the credit for bringing the operations to such a successful issue. He cultivated the acquaintance and the friendship of the Mundas of Tamar, persuaded them and their Mankis to dissociate themselves from the Larka Kols and to keep them out of the dominions of the Raja, and also made friends with the Sardars of the Larkas in Porahat. Many are the stories which the Mundas relate about "Alkinsum Sahib" the name

by which they remember Captain Wilkinson, the first Agent to the Governor General in the South-West Frontier Agency.

Though the occasion of the insurrection was the treatment of the Sonpur and Porahat Mundas by the Sikh and Muhammadans thikadars, the causes were more deep-seated, as the following extracts from the report if the Joint Commissioners, Mr Dent and Captain Wilkinson, will show:—

"The Kols throughout Nagpur had within the last few years had their rents increased by their ilakadars, zamindars and thikadars by 35 per cent. They had made roads through the pargana without payment, as begarries (forced labour). The Mahajans, who advanced money and grain, managed within a twelve month to get from them 70 per cent, and sometimes more. They disliked the tax upon liquor, which was fixed at four annas a house, but more than that amount was levied very generally, besides a rupee salami on almost every village and a khasi or goat. The thana establishments were also complained of, and a dak establishment was kept up, the expense of which fall upon the Kols of those villages which were situated on the lines of road traversed by the dak. The raiyats of the Raja's bhandar (khas) villages complain that the present Diwan had within the last five years taken from them double the quantity of saika grain (proportionate) which he did formerly. The peons collecting rents in the ~~proportionate~~ <sup>proportionate</sup> formerly received one paila of rice or one anna per diem. They now take four since the present Dewan came into power. The dhangars, who go as labourers into Bengal and other parts of India, are on their return forced to pay one rupee to the owner or farmer of the village. Many people from below the ghat have settled in Nagpur and it was one of the subjects of complaint among the Kols that within the last five years several of these settlers, to whom they had become deeply indebted, had pressed so hard for payment that many of the Kols had executed *sewak pattas* that is, had sold their services till the debt was discharged, which was in fact binding themselves to give their whole earnings to their creditors, receiving from him food and clothing, or to work for him exclusively, this becoming his bondsman for life. The complaints against the thana *amla* were loud in our progress through the country, but the number of instances of exaction are by no means as numerous as we anticipated."—M. G. Hallett and T. S. McPherson, *Bihar District Gazetteers, Ranchi* (Patna, 1917), pp. 31-35.

V. E.





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